TELOS

Number 84 Summer 1990

The Future of the USSR

Piccone: Paradoxes of *Perestroika*
Luke: Postcommunism in the USSR
Pellicani: Preconditions for Soviet Development
Brandt: Economic Reform and Soviet Nationality
Goldman: Soviet Federalism?
Flaherty: The Making of the New Soviet Left
Bérard-Zarzicka: The Authoritarian *Perestroika* Debate
Migranian, Kliamkin and Zorina: An Authoritarian *Perestroika*?
Nelson: The Soviet Union and Europe

also included:

Wilke: Adorno and Derrida on Husserl
Mattson: The Dialectic of Powerlessness
Fraser: Fraser vs. Fraser

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Telos

A Quarterly Journal of Critical Thought

Editor: *Paul Piccone* Notes Editor: *Warren L. Habib*

Book Review Editor: *Florindo Volpacchio* Managing Editor: *Kerry Milliron*

Acting Manuscript Editor: *David Pan*

Editorial Associates: *Frank Adler, John Alt, Ken Anderson, Russell Berman, John Bokina, Paul Breines, Susan Buck-Morss, Robert D'Amico, Maurice Finocchiaro, Andrew Fraser, Moishe Gonzales, David Gross, Robert Hullot-Kentor, Russell Jacoby, Tim Luke, Eleni Mahaira-Odoni, Kevin Mattson, Joseph McCahery, Magda Mueller, David Ost, Arshi Pipa, Gabor Rittersporn, Michael Taves, G. L. Ulmen, Victor Zaslavsky.*

Special Consultant: *Edna L. Coplan*

*****

Subscription Rates

One-year Individual . . . . $28.00 One-year Institutional $70.00
Two-years Individual . . . $56.00 Two-years Institutional . . .$140.00
(Foreign Subscribers, including Canadians, add 15%)

*****

Back Issues available: ns. 13, 17-51, 53-83 at $8.50 each ($17.00 for institutions). Foreign orders, add 15%. All payments must be in U.S. currency. Out of print issues (ns. 1-12, 14-16, 52) can be obtained in microform or facsimile through University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106, U.S.A.

Telos number 84 corresponds to Vol. 23, No. 2. ***Telos*** is published in the Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter by Telos Press Ltd., 431 E. 12th Street, New York, NY 10009. Second Class postage paid at New York and additional mailing offices.

Telos
431 E. 12th Street
New York, NY 10009 U.S.A.

© 1990, Telos Press Ltd.

ISSN 0090-6514

Unsolicited manuscripts will be considered only if the author provides at least three clean, finished copies conforming to the appropriate ***Telos*** style, or an IBM-compatible diskette in ASCII, Wordstar or Wordperfect programs. Allow at least three months for editorial evaluation. Manuscripts accepted for publication which undergo considerable editing will be sent back to authors for final approval. Rejected manuscripts will be recycled.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Telos

A Quarterly Journal of Critical Thought

Number 84 Summer 1990

Table of Contents

Articles

Paradoxes of *Perestroika* 3
Paul Piccone
Postcommunism in the USSR: The McGulag Archipelago..... 33
Tim Luke
Preconditions for Soviet Economic Development 43
Luciano Pellicani
Economic Reform and the Soviet National Question 58
Joseph C. Brandt
Perestroika: End or Beginning of Soviet Federalism? 69
Philip Goldman
The Making of the New Soviet Left..... 88
Patrick Flaherty
The Authoritarian *Perestroika* Debate..... 115
Ewa Bérard-Zarzicka
An Authoritarian *Perestroika*?: A Roundtable 125
Andranik Migranian, Igor Kliamkin and Irina Zorina
The Soviet Union and Europe..... 142
Daniel N. Nelson
Adorno and Derrida on Husserl 155
Sabine Wilke

Notes

The Dialectic of Powerlessness:
Black Identity Culture and Affirmative Action 177
Kevin Mattson

Reviews

Fraser vs. Fraser 185
David Fraser

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

new german critique

an interdisciplinary journal of german studies
editors: David Bathrick, Helen Fehervary, Andreas Huyssen, Anson G. Rabinbach and Jack Zipes

New German Critique is the first American journal to develop a comprehensive discussion of German politics, social theory, art and literature on an international level.

NUMBER 49 WINTER 1990

Alexander Kluge: The Assault of the Present on the Rest of Time
Eric Rentschler: Remembering Not to Forget: A Retrospective Reading of Kluge's *Brutality in Stone*
Timothy Corrigan: The Commerce of Auteurism: a Voice without Authority
Helke Sander: The Films of Alexander Kluge
Heide Schlüpmann: Femininity as Productive Force
Gertrud Koch: Kluge's Phantom of the Opera
Alexander Kluge: On Opera, Film and Feelings
Richard Wolin: On Misunderstanding Habermas
John Rajchman: Rejoinder to Wolin
Marc Silberman: Remembering History: The Filmmaker Konrad Wolf

Personal one year subscriptions cost $22.00 in the US and $25.00 elsewhere. One year institutional subscriptions cost $50.00 in the US and $57.50 elsewhere. Make checks payable in US funds, drawn on US Banks. Back issues are $8.50 each. Institutions pay $17.00 Send all correspondence to: Telos Press, 431 E. 12th St., New York, NY 10009.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Paradoxes of Perestroika

Paul Piccone

Reform and/or Disintegration?

The intensification of hitherto largely unsuccessful efforts to restructure the Soviet system has had, as one of its lesser unintended consequences, the marginalization of old debates about the nature of the USSR. New problems concerning the future of that society now appear considerably more compelling. If the system is indeed undergoing a radical restructuring, what seems to matter is not so much what it *was*, but what it is about to *become*. Since, however, in the USSR today nothing seems to proceed as projected, the configuration of this future is far from clear. As a rule, unforeseen blockages and covert bureaucratic opposition subvert reform proposals even before they are fully deployed, thus intensifying chronic economic dysfunctions. The old is crumbling before the new has a chance to take its place. As a result, *perestroika* has long ceased to be a mere peripheral matter meant to reform a system initially thought to be *reformable*, i.e., able to undergo the necessary structural changes without losing its identity. It has become fairly clear that nothing short of radical modifications in the very nature of the system will do. Gorbachev himself readily admits that full marketization is now the USSR's only hope.[1] This means a radical restructuring of fundamental economic relations such as the reintroduction of private ownership of the means of production, free markets for labor and capital, and full integration in the capitalist world system.

1. As Pellicani argues, however, even this may not be sufficient, without the simultaneous implementation of radical juridical and political reforms which would amount to the most thorough dismantling of the Soviet system as it has developed over the last 70 years. See Luciano Pellicani, "Preconditions for Soviet Economic Development," in this issue of *Telos*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Since there are no historical precedents for the transformation of a socialist system operating as a command economy to a system based on free market relations, it is difficult to prefigure how to replace the present system or exactly with what. Vague utopian projections of a gradual, even if disruptive, "Westernization" as the outcome of the dismantling of the central planning system and of the repressive apparatus have floundered in unforeseen structural obstacles to reforms. Deploying radical economic measures (marketization) and removing political restrictions (democratization) in order to facilitate these reforms is apparently not enough to usher in efficiency and rationality while retaining a modicum of social stability. The result has been a great deal of discussion, but no corresponding economic improvements. Contrary to the conventional wisdom of Western liberals postulating political democratization as a precondition for economic rationalization, in the present Soviet context the two processes seem to be even more incompatible than in other less crisis-ridden systems.

In assuming Soviet society to be either a special case of its Western counterparts (another variant of industrial society[2]) or a qualitatively different social formation (a totalitarian system[3]), the two mainstream interpretations of the USSR are unable to provide a credible explanation of the present predicament. The first one projects an inevitable Westernization in the wake of *perestroika* (understood as modernization of the obsolete state apparatus), while the second tends to rule out , at least in some of its more ideological interpretations, the possibility of the

2. This was the original official Soviet interpretation which, predicated on the orthodox Marxist-Leninist model of base and superstructure, proposed *perestroika* as a routine normalization of an obsolete superstructure to correspond to a more developed base. It was Tatyana Zaslavskaya's explanation, which was subsequently adopted by the Gorbachev leadership. See "The Novosibirsk Report," in *Survey*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1984), pp. 83-108. Since then, however, it has become accepted among a broad spectrum of Western Sovietologists such as Lewin, Hough, Cohen, etc. See Moshe Lewin, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon: A Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Jerry Hough, *Russia and the West: Gorbachev and the Politics of Reform* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988). Ultimately, it is a variant of the old convergence thesis according to which both the US and the USSR would eventually gravitate, because of technological imperatives, towards roughly similar systems.

3. Various rather different versions of this thesis were originally developed in the 1950s by Arendt, Friedrich and Brzezinski, *et al*. Because of the ideological requirements of the Cold War, however, it was Friedrich's version which eventually became predominant. See Carl J. Friedrich's "The Unique Character of Totalitarian Sociaty," in Friedrich, ed., *Totalitarianism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954); Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt/Brace Jovanovich, 1966); and Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (New York: Praeger, 1961).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

internal reformability of the system. Since the system is in fact being reformed but does not seem readily susceptible to rationalization and modernization, it may be necessary to reexamine some standard assumptions. An account of Soviet society able to explain satisfactorily recent developments requires a clear idea concerning the nature of the USSR. Otherwise, it is difficult to establish exactly what has collapsed that has allowed a leadership such as Gorbachev's to come into being and remain in power, what kind of remedial measures are not only necessary but also *possible*, or why economic and political reforms have turned out immensely more difficult to formulate and implement than originally assumed — so difficult, in fact, as to require the dismantling of the whole system as a precondition for their implementation.

As a result, all analyses of the USSR and Eastern Europe (or of the broader question of "the future of socialism") that aspire to be more than speculation should be prefaced by some preliminary rethinking about the trajectory of Soviet history. Many of the earlier debates concerning the nature of the Soviet system may be actually essential to understand the dynamics of the present crisis. On closer analysis, some of these earlier theoretical elaborations have mediated political behavior and, as such, have had an impact on the course of events. Among other things, they have been decisive in shaping the political consciousness of much of the Soviet and East European opposition now emerging, especially in Eastern Europe, as an essential component of the new power structure. As it turns out, unresolved theoretical issues have left a legacy of unmanageable political paradoxes. What was prefigured as a qualitatively new predicament, the institutionalization of a vibrant "civil society," today seems to be nothing more than the recycling, under extremely unfavorable conditions, of that very capitalism the system of central planning had unsuccessfully sought to transcend or bypass.

At any rate, in underemphasizing the role of the opposition's theoretical outlook during earlier efforts to reform the Soviet empire, most interpretations of recent events have a difficult time understanding the contradictory political predicament of post-communist regimes in Eastern Europe or of the new opposition in the USSR. Thus they[4] take

4. These are the standard interpretations one finds in *Socialist Review*'s symposium, "Now What? Responses to Socialism's Crisis of Meaning," Vol. 20, No. 2 (April-June 1990); or, with the exception of balanced accounts by, e.g., Christopher Lasch and Eugene Genovese, in *Commentary*'s symposium, "The American 80's: Disaster or Triumph?," Vol. 90, No. 3 (September 1990). Not surprisingly, the first set is predicated

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the easy way out by recourse to facile ideological deductions whereby the deployment of *perestroika* is seen either as capitalism's unconditional victory or as merely the collapse of the Stalinist perversion of an otherwise fundamentally sound socialism. The legacy of misreadings of the past takes its toll in generating even more misleading analyses of the present.

Totalitarianism or Dictatorship?

Take the most standard interpretation of the Soviet Union as a *totalitarian* system where the state, or the Party that runs it, politicizes every feature of everyday life, leaving no social or political space for autonomous activity. Originally deployed to explain the aims of fascism as a comprehensive system able to overcome the fragmentation and alienation of traditional liberalism,[5] the concept of "totalitarianism" was subsequently extended by Arendt, among others, to account for the barbarities of Nazism in Germany and, eventually, in a not altogether satisfactory manner, for Stalin's Russia,[6] It was meant to describe how

---

on the implicit acceptance of the usual reading of Soviet society as merely another variant of "industrial society," while the second set seems to rely more on the totalitarian thesis.

5. According to Shapiro, the concept was first used by Giovanni Gentile in 1925, in outlining the objectives of the new fascist regime. See Leonard Shapiro, *Totalitarianism* (London: The Pall Mall Press, 1972), p. 13.

6. Because of the merely historical character of Nazism and the actuality of communism, Arendt's account of the social-psychological *origins* of totalitarianism has been gradually displaced by a much cruder political version concerned primarily with communism as a political system tolerating no opposition. Meant primarily as a psychologistic attempt to explain the dehumanizing processes of alienation and massification which led people to participate in the cold-blooded genocide of the Nazi camps, Arendt's account provided a peculiar *description* of the debilitating consequences of the dissolution of the national community as the precondition for morality and humanity in the wake of British imperialist expansion. Prefiguring the disintegrating impact of the cultural relativism and nihilism of post-modernism, Arendt stressed as the decisive element of totalitarianism not the state's incorporation of society and the individual, but the disintegration of what Carl Schmitt called the *jus publicum Europæum*. For Arendt as well as Schmitt, it is the concrete national juridical framework rooted in the traditions and customs of a thriving community that constitutes the individual as a responsible citizen. This decisive communitarian legacy in Arendt, however, has been forgotten or repressed by her alleged followers, who have managed to degrade her account of the totalitarian thesis by reducing it to its political consequences or by confusing it with a deceptively anti-Marxist vindication of a mythical "civil society" opposed to an equally mythical (and inherently evil) state. See Claude Lefort, "Hannah Arendt and the Question of the Political," in *Democracy and Political Theory*, trans. by David Macey (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 45-55. Lefort is at least honest enough to acknowledge the gap separating Arendt's communitarian concerns with participatory democracy as the only valid kind from the new conformist theorists of representative democracy — even if he considers Arendt's unease with the latter "disturbing."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a modern dictatorship, with new and immensely more powerful means of mass communication, destruction and control at its disposal, sought to penetrate every feature of everyday life without, however, succeeding in exhausting the autonomy of social being. Given the context within which it was developed, it is not surprising that it readily became instrumentalized during the Cold War as an apology for the *status quo* in the West. By implicitly assuming as "natural" the socio-economic inequalities and degradation of everyday life engendered by capitalist and neo-capitalist systems (the unavoidable costs of political freedom and of open societies), the interpretation of the USSR and its satellites as "totalitarian regimes" became part of the official American legitimating ideology. As has often been pointed out since the original articulation of this ideologically instrumentalized version of the totalitarianism thesis, this static approach occludes essential internal dynamics which make it impossible for any society either to indefinitely stall social change or become permanently stable — especially under conditions of a problematic legitimacy.[7]

Cold War interpretations of the USSR as a "brave new world" have always been unrealistic, even during the darkest hours of Stalinism. No society of this type can possibly exist. Such an ideological representation was the product of identity logic — the projection of unavoidably partial concepts on a much richer reality, which is thereby occluded and reconfigured only in terms of what concepts can grasp. The projected idealized society can never correspond entirely to the real thing, leaving unexamined and unaccounted features which eventually manage to subvert any plans that do not constantly attempt, through re-examinations, to recuperate what was necessarily excluded. Thus no brave new world or totally administered society (or their utopian otherness: heavenly settings where all goes as planned and everyone is forever happy) are *in principle* possible, either in 1984 or at any future date, no matter what new diabolical technology may become available to carry out manipulation, indoctrination and repression.

Being and thought are such that no conceptual scheme, no matter how rational and elaborate, can ever exhaust or permanently control social reality. Gödel's undecidability theorem concerning the inescapable incompatibility of coherence *and* completeness of formal systems also applies to socio-political systems. A system such as liberalism or

7. See Carl J. Friedrich, Michael Curtis and Benjamin Barber, *Totalitarianism in Perspective: Three Views* (New York: Praeger, 1969).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fascism may thereby attain coherence, but only by leaving out crucial areas of existence,[8] while other systems such as Nazism may aim at political completeness, but only by becoming internally incoherent in fragmenting administrative functions and instrumentalizing modernizing scientistic ideologies as well as archaic and irrational ones such as the Aryan mythology. In the worst of all possible cases, as in Soviet-type societies, they end up both incomplete *and* incoherent. They remain incomplete by failing to eliminate or integrate all traditions and customs (which continue thriving under repression as the foundations of future alternatives or oppositions) and they become incoherent when they attempt to unleash a blind *formal* rationality which, given the impossibility of systematically encompassing all of social reality, ends up generating the most irrational unintended *substantial* consequences.

The ineradicable residue that is unavoidably excluded and the vacuum that thought leaves behind whenever it seeks to overwhelm Being constantly recreate the space within which freedom and morality can thrive to challenge any tendentially "totalitarian" effort to constrain or altogether erase this freedom.[9] Ergo, totalitarianism is at best an horizon that socio-political systems can aim towards but never actually reach. By overemphasizing the ubiquity of state power and the complementary powerlessness of the society it dominates, the ideologists of totalitarianism occlude the fact that any state, no matter how powerful, is ultimately based on a legitimating consensus whose successful constitution and reconstitution over time determines its persistence and dynamics. This seemingly extraneous epistemological detail undermines conventional wisdom concerning totalitarian regimes. Accordingly, unlike authoritarian regimes, once in place totalitarian regimes are not susceptible to peaceful reversals into democratic regimes either by

8. Although Italian fascism began by advocating a truly totalitarian ideology, it failed miserably in its stated effort to penetrate all aspects of Being and integrate them into the state as various *fasci*. See Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

9. Even sophisticated rationalist schemes such as Habermas' reformulation of the problem in terms of system and lifeworld ultimately end up reducing the Being that the lifeworld is meant to articulate into the necessary preconditions for the production and reproduction of life. Such a rationalist scheme, like all such schemes, fails to capture Being *as such* and attains coherence only at the expense of completeness. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. II, "Life-world and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason," trans. by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987). Efforts by Habermas' American epigones to introject the epicycle of "civil society" between the two levels to vindicate that concrete political freedom erased by the rationalist reduction of Being to thought (or by the integration of the lifeworld into the system) within communication theory, only compound the problem.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

democratic means or by internal reform.[10] On the contrary, because of their fragile legitimating foundations, "totalitarian" systems are intrinsically unstable — even if this instability usually becomes problematic only during the recomposition of the power elite as a result of the dictator's death and, therefore, of the temporary obliteration of the regime's charismatic character.[11] In those crucial junctures, the new elite must recreate a legitimating consensus in support of *extraordinary* repressive measures which can only be justified in terms of a *temporary* state of exemption or the constitution of a qualitatively new society.

Although disposing over immensely more efficient means of communication and destruction, which have made possible not only the Lagers and the Gulags, but also thought control and the culture industry, so-called "totalitarian" regimes are modern versions of dictatorships[12]

---

10. Introduced by Jeane J. Kirkpatrick in her "Dictatorships and Double Standards," in *Commentary* (November 1979), this distinction — a crude Cold War elaboration of Heinz Otto Ziegler, *Authoritärer oder Totaler Staat* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1932) — became the basis for Reagan's remilitarization strategy in the 1980s to confront "totalitarian" communist regimes now deemed irreversible and, therefore, terminally adversarial. The distinction also justified US support for right-wing "authoritarian" dictatorships which, although as abusive of human rights as any left-wing "totalitarian" regime, were thereby seen only as temporary aberrations reversible into democratic regimes at some future date.

11. The totalitarian thesis understood as the state's successful penetration of all social institutions has been lethal for critical analyses of Soviet-type regimes. It has been accepted even by those who not only claim to follow in Arendt's footsteps but, having spent most of their lives under East European communist regimes, ought to know better. In accepting the thesis of the total closure of "totalitarian" societies — at least for the Soviet Union — they proceed to deduce its logical corollary that, since there is no space in these societies for internal pluralism and opposition, "the collapse of Soviet totalitarianism cannot occur through any gradual change, but only by a predictably cruel revolution." Cf. Agnes Heller, "An Imaginary Preface to the 1984 Edition of Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*," in Ferenc Fehér and Agnes Heller, *Eastern Left, Western Left: Totalitarianism, Freedom and Democracy* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1987), p. 258. The debilitating consequences of this approach go beyond providing poor political analyses in that they foreclose other more useful approaches. Thus they entail the automatic dismissal of "never-ending attempts by Sovietologists to fathom the secrets of a possible future leader" as "academic exercises" (p. 259), whereas, as Gorbachev has demonstrated, leadership is in fact *decisive*. The only consolation for Heller's analysis is that her closing hopes to the effect that her prognosis be wrong have been completely realized.

12. Heller thinks that the concept of dictatorship is inextricably connected with underdevelopment and backwardness (hence, relegated to analyses of Third World regimes), whereas totalitarianism is a quintessentially modern phenomenon applicable to "modern" societies such as the USSR (*ibid.*, p. 252). There is no evidence whatsoever for such a position. As one of the possible outcomes of a tired Enlightenment, Soviet communism can be more appropriately seen as the culmination of a long tradition of dictatorships beginning with "the Enlightenment's educational dictatorship, philosophical Jacobinism, the tyranny of reason," etc. See Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, trans. by Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), p. 52ff.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and cannot be explained simply as the result of the raw domination by a dictator or an elite over an otherwise victimized populace passively enduring a forcibly imposed "illegitimate" system. Rather, they must be analyzed in terms of exactly *how* any such system manages over time to produce and reproduce its own legitimation as an *exceptional* regime. When all is said and done, societies end up with the regimes they deserve — a point well-taken by East European dissidents in the 1970s when they launched their strategy of "antipolitics" and undertook the reconstitution of society as a precondition for any eventual political reforms. It is tautological that even the most brutal dictatorships can last only as long as their power is backed by sufficient support, be it from the military, the bureaucracy, the working class, the clergy, etc.

From Totalitarianism to Civil Society

The theorizing of totalitarianism as a stable social model is the result of the ideological contraposition of an idealized open society (the capitalist West) of rational citizens freely interacting for the common good to a closed society (the Soviet Union) controlled in every detail by a political apparatus manifestly pursuing unattainable goals and justifying the deployment of any means to actually guarantee not so much the achievement of these goals as the perpetuation of the privileges and domination of the *nomenklatura* over the rest of society. While correct in its reading of new class relations in Soviet-type societies, this Cold War formulation has generated one-sided analyses and ungrounded expectations concerning the eventual consequences of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. In over-reacting against the economistic biases of Marxism-Leninism, it privileges political relations at the expense of other more fundamental social realities they presuppose and which make them possible. Thus, if what is wrong with Soviet society is essentially political in nature, then what is needed to reform the system along Western lines is essentially democratization and the creation of a public sphere: *glasnost* will automatically pave the way for *perestroika* and, eventually, full Westernization assumed as the paradigm of normality. Such an approach has generated considerable confusion within East European and Soviet opposition circles and even more theoretical dead-ends in post-Marxist Western political theory predicated on unwarranted generalizations of the recent experiences of Soviet-type societies.

Since traditional politics was impossible within societies providing no viable public space for such activities (especially in the wake of the Soviet repression of the 1956 Hungarian revolution and the 1968

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Czechoslovak invasion), and the situation seemed increasingly hopeless, East European dissidents, especially KOR in Poland, developed the "antipolitics" strategy. Accordingly, the focus shifted from clearly counterproductive direct political challenges to nurturing autonomous social institutions independent of the state and seemingly posing no political threat to the existing power elite.[13] As Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik and other dissidents knew all too well, however, within Soviet-type societies every autonomous undertaking is automatically political since these regimes seek to politicize *all* social activities.[14] Thus, from the very beginning, antipolitics was political through and through and, for that reason, it was violently opposed by the various communist regimes, which immediately sought to eradicate it by whatever means necessary, from standard secret police tactics to martial law.

In his history of Solidarity in Poland, Ost equates the East European oppositional strategy with what in the West a decade earlier had been heralded as the Great Refusal — a defiantly passive stance understood at that time as the only viable oppositional strategy in the age of one-dimensionality, i.e., an age during which *traditional* modes of opposition had been irreversibly coopted by the system. Only by developing new life-styles and social relations uncontaminated by capitalist exploitation and instrumental rationality would "outsiders" be able to challenge the otherwise all-pervasive logic of domination. Unfortunately, Marcuse and all other theoreticians of the Great Refusal were wrong. The hope that such an approach could make any real dent in the system soon turned out to be groundless. Post-industrial capitalism proved to be much more dynamic than had been assumed. There was no privileged social space from which to challenge the system's irrational foundations without having criticisms and indictments instrumentalized by the system as internal control mechanisms. As soon as any "negativity" attracted sufficient attention, it was either coopted by the bureaucratic apparatus or the culture industry — as happened with yippie culture, ecologism, rock music, etc. — or, in the rare instances where that turned out to be impossible, annihilated — as with the Black Panthers. There were no real alternatives to working *within* the system.

---

13. George Konrad, *Antipolitics* (San Diego: Harcourt/Brace Jovanovich, 1984). For an excellent summary of the genesis of these political developments over the last two decades, see David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Antipolitics: Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), especially Chapter 2: "Civil Society and the 'Third Road'," pp. 19-32.

14. Ost, *op. cit.*, pp. 64ff.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Most of the politicized members of the New Left eventually came to this conclusion and either violently rejected what they now regarded as mistaken youthful views in favor of various shades of neo-conservatism[15] or, when they did not simply "drop out," held on to their egalitarian values while flocking to the ill-fated 1972 McGovern Presidential campain (and, later, to various Rainbow Coalitions and social movements). Thus, by the early 1970s, this Great Refusal had fizzled out in the West either into the self-destruction of the drug culture or into a Grudging Approval of aging, frustrated ex-radicals now seeking integration in the previously despised *status quo* — preferably in its Ivory Towers.[16]

In Eastern Europe, a version of this Great Refusal, partly imported and partly domestically-generated, managed to have a much more illustrious career. Because of the inflexibility and repressive nature of Marxist-Leninist regimes, political realities were the exact opposite of those generated by Western assimilationist logic — the cultural equivalent of the Italian *trasformismo* or of the long-standing practice of the Mexican Institutional Revolutionary Party. The communist economy of scarcity ruled out both escape into drugs (which, along with other esoteric commodities, were simply unavailable — at least, before the Afghanistan involvement in the early 1980s) as well as integration into the unforgiving power structure. Notwithstanding or rather because of the persistent repression, the opposition retained or strengthened its identity at the price of becoming even more politically impotent. Thus the strategy of antipolitics failed even in Poland where, after the initial recognition of Solidarity, martial law in December 1981 almost instantly reinstituted the *status quo ante*, until the economic crisis forced the regime to seek a neo-corporatist way out by coopting the opposition.[17] Yet, precisely because it was defeated by raw repression rather than rational arguments or through political competition, the East European opposition found itself compelled to make no significant ideological or strategic adjustments.

Confronted with the paradox of individual success and collective defeat engendered by the system's logic of assimilation, the unreformed orthodox New Left in the West also avoided confronting the fundamental

15. Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *The Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts about the 1960s* (New York: Summit Books, 1989).

16. See Paul Piccone, "Reinterpreting 1968: Mythology on the Make," in *Telos* 77 (Fall 1988), pp. 7-44.

17. Ost, *op. cit.*, pp. 191ff.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strategic flaw in the original vision. Instead, it opted for a conformist post-modern neo-corporatist redefinition of politics in terms of race, gender and other politically redeemable particularities susceptible to the sponsorship of a by now academically entrenched New Left vanguard increasingly disillusioned with both the working class and the counterculture. This convenient political reorientation was not an option in Eastern Europe, where the opposition was completely marginalized by a seemingly all-powerful ruling elite. The intensification of repression during Brezhnev's tenure in the 1970s simply reinforced the general feeling of hopelessness and futility and, consequently, also the belief that antipolitics was the only possible mode of resistance. The result was the elaboration of the myth of an autonomous "civil society" operating independently of the state apparatus as the Achilles' heel of any "totalitarian" system. Having uncritically accepted the totalitarian thesis, the remaining but rapidly dwindling East European opposition assumed the permanence of the various communist regimes and began to hope that, by leaving political power unchallenged and focusing on establishing free social space independent of the state, such a strategy may gradually develop a society split between political power and social life. The obvious model was the Catholic Church in Poland which, notwithstanding constant communist repression, had managed to function as an autonomous institution and thus constitute a continuous source of opposition. Overtly or covertly, this became the model for the reconstitution of a broader "civil society" to contrapose to an otherwise unchallengeable state apparatus.[18]

The integration of the Western New Left and the repression of its East European counterpart was symptomatic of a broader social dynamic. It signalled, among other things, that advanced capitalism was still a viable system able to instrumentalize oppositions as internal control mechanisms guaranteeing a minimal overall rationality, unlike bureaucratic centralism, which was seemingly unable to do so. Notwithstanding its internal problems, capitalism and its "bourgeois" institutional framework was still developing, while bureaucratic centralism was not and, consequently, was headed towards a terminal crisis. Western neo-corporatist strategies of empowering allegedly self-constituted (but actually mediatized) corporatist constituencies to retain the system's representative structure while avoiding the structural reforms necessary to deal effectively with inequality, social disintegration and

18. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ecological destruction did work. The system's legitimacy was salvaged at the price of intensifying the problems that originally threatened it. By embroiling the system's alleged victims in the institutions responsible for existing social dysfunctions, these institutions were rendered formally representative and therefore legitimate within the new *de facto* neo-corporatist compromise. Nothing of the kind took place in communist countries. There, repression of all opposition and the continuing reliance on a social compromise that (as it turned out) could not be upheld without eventually dismantling the political system itself eventually doomed the whole system. When it was finally decided to deploy an integrationist, neo-corporatist strategy in Poland, it was too late. It was not too late, however, to misread neo-corporatist realignments as *democratic* victories and as the revitalization of a mythical "civil society." From the viewpoint of the heirs of the Great Refusal, these developments were ideologically reinterpreted as political victories resulting from world-wide movements for democratization — a continuation of 1968 by other means.

This approach has been described as "postmodern politics."[19] Although it is not clear what this means, Ost takes postmodernism to include the unrestrained recycling of archaic or otherwise unorthodox concepts within pluralist frameworks — something which must look extremely appealing to those who have had to endure the blessings of the monolithic Party-state. Yet it is also a politics of irresponsibility, parasitic on a well-structured context independently determining the logic of the whole. It remains viable only as long as the general level of affluence and social stability banishes it to the social margins (as in the West), or the monopoly of power by the state renders any alternative futile (as in Eastern Europe up to the late 1980s). When confronted with translating its "negations" into a positive political program, postmodern politics either collapses into chaos or readily falls back in the previously dismissed modernist fold by seeking to integrate its artificial heteronomy within a neo-corporatist compromise. This is precisely what happened with "the Great Refusal" when it infiltrated the Democratic Party in 1972 and tried to elect McGovern (or when it helped launch Jackson's Rainbow Coalition in the 1980s).

This is also what is happening in Eastern Europe today,[20] after the various oppositions have taken power in the wake of Gorbachev's decision

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

20. Timothy Garton Ash, "Eastern Europe: Après le Déluge, Nous," in *New York Review of Books*, Vol. XXVII, No. 13 (August 16, 1990), pp. 51-57.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to dismantle an empire he could neither afford nor manage. Upon taking power, civil society ideologists quickly adjusted to corporatist politics dictated by the communist power structure (in Poland). Then, after it became obvious that there were no Soviet tanks propping up the various local communist regimes, they rediscovered the virtues of politics-as-usual, while attempting, like the careless sorcerer's apprentice, to control the demonic forces they have unwittingly released. The major components of the long-projected reconstitution of an autonomous civil society, the working classes, are now increasingly joining forces with the remnants of the old bureaucratic apparatus to contain the detrimental consequences of those economic reforms necessary for dismantling the system of central planning — the last stronghold of communist reaction. Worse yet, the newly politicized subjects in Eastern Europe and the USSR do not seem particularly inclined to behave like aloof Habermasian scholars gathered around a seminar table and engaged in undistorted communication among themselves in the calm search for a democratic consensus, as fantasized by civil society ideologists. When not overtly engaged in obstructing radical economic reforms, to the extent that they are still mired in premodern traditions and customs, they engender scores of ethnic, religious, racial and national conflicts no longer containable by an increasingly weak central state power — a rather scruffy and uncivil predicament.

The East European dissidents' guerrilla politics was not so much predicated on the seemingly innocuous and naive distinction of the political and the non-political (or antipolitical) understood in terms of what did or did not fall within the domain of the state, which did in fact draw sharp political lines, but, to reiterate, on the implicit assumption of a version of the totalitarian thesis postulating the communist system's uninterrupted stability. The ultimate political implications of antipolitics could never really have fooled anyone — least of all communists, for whom the Leninist doctrine of dual power as a tactic during a pre-revolutionary situation had always been part of their political strategy. Contrary to the claims of various recent ideological reconstructions of what happened in Eastern Europe,[21] antipolitics failed

21. For typically ideological misreadings, see Bogdan Denitch, *The End of the Cold War: European Unity, Socialism, and the Shift in Global Power* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp. 45ff. According to Denitch, the East European upheavals are Luxemburgian revolutions, where "the crucial difference is the appearance of mass pressure from below" (p. 50), against regimes for whose "existence the United States shares . . . the moral and political responsibility" (pp. xiii and xvi). Consequently, in addition to writing off these countries' huge debts (p. xvii), the US should provide

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

miserably.[22] The reason why the opposition was even able to survive had to do with rather different dynamics, such as economic crises, international opinion (effecting credit ratings or trade status) and various other internal factors. When push came to shove, the military was always there to intervene, as it did to outlaw Solidarity or to marginalize the Catholic Church by means of martial law, assassinations, etc. Only when the regime desperately needed to reconstitute a minimal consensus necessary to patch up a bankrupt economy was Solidarity, which in the meantime had disintegrated into a myth or a mere symbol,[23] literally resurrected and, primed with official political formaldeyde, allowed to reconstruct a movement by that time hopelessly fractured.[24]

At any rate, none of the East European theoreticians of antipolitics or, later, of "civil society," partly because of the implicit acceptance of the totalitarian thesis, seriously considered that the Marxist-Leninist dictatorship in the USSR had not only exhausted its legitimating mandate but was no longer even able to uphold Brezhnev's "historical compromise,"[25] which had allowed communism to perpetuate itself for another two decades. This compromise, responsible for the so-called "era of stagnation," eventually collapsed when it turned out that Soviet and East European societies were endemically unable to make the crucial transition from extensive to intensive development, already completed in the West. Consequently, these societies exhausted their

---

considerable aid with no strings attached to help them eventually develop genuine socialism, whose establishment "will be a great deal easier in Eastern Europe once these societies democratize" (p. 49) — in spite of the fact that "new Eastern European petty capitalists will clearly exacerbate class atagonisms through their very visible consumption of luxuries, avoidance of taxes and regulations, and attempts to corrupt local governments and political parties." (p. 55). Thus Denitch calls for a new "democratic debate in the United States about defense and foreign policy" (p. xviii) to convince American voters, who presently "pay the lowest taxes in the advanced industrial world," to underwrite in Eastern Europe the kind of socialism that has been consistently rejected at home. Apparently, some people are unable to read the voters' lips. A similar, but slightly more realistic and therefore pessimistic analysis can be found in Stanley Aronowitz, "The Future of Socialism?," in *Social Text* 24 (1990), pp. 85-116, where a hip postmodernism ends up dissolving socialism into a plethora of conflicting social movements unable to coalesce into any general strategy now dismissed as a "master discourse of history" (p. 115) whose mythological character can only engender new modes of domination.

22. David Ost, "The Transformation of Solidarity," in *Telos* 79 (Spring 1989), pp. 74ff.

23. Ost, *Solidarity*, *op. cit.*, p. 191. Cf. also Jadwiga Staniszkis, "The Obsolescence of Solidarity," in *Telos* 80 (Summer 1989), pp. 37-50.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 153ff.

25. Victor Zaslavsky, *The Neo-Stalinist State: Class, Ethnicity and Consensus in Soviet Society* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1982), pp. 130ff.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

growth potentials. Because of the structural lack of incentives to modernize the industrial apparatus, the sharp separation between closed military enterprises and those producing consumer goods (in the USSR), the chronic crisis in agriculture, etc., the system gradually settled into a terminal stagnation. The semblance of growth, slowly improving living standards and upward social mobility, which were the main props of the Brezhnevite compromise, had been secured in a period during which *extensive* growth was no longer possible because of demographic limitations and the liquidation rather than renewal of previously abundant natural assets — assets which were rather depleted by the early 1980s.

Consequently, when Gorbachev launched *perestroika*, without which the collapse of all East European regimes would have been unthinkable (or, at best, would have resulted in Polish-type neo-corporatist solutions where the Party would have managed to maintain hegemony indefinitely) almost all the members of the opposition in the Soviet empire suspiciously derided it as a tactical device meant to facilitate negotiations with the West, serve particular interests in routine power struggles within the Kremlin elite, or fulfill other equally dubious political functions.[26] Worse yet, after the obvious could no longer be denied, rather than admit their mistaken understanding of Soviet and East European realities as a result of their naive theoretical perspective, civil society ideologists sought to save face by compounding their mistakes and reinterpreting the *collapse* of Soviet-type systems as a result of "democratic" pressures. The lesson of Tienanmen Square, that in communist regimes *with sufficient political will* and internal cohesion tanks can usually defeat any political opposition at any given time without thereby solving whatever crisis spurred it into existence, has not been learned.[27] Thus the 1989 demise of communism in Eastern Europe is seen as a political victory by the democratic opposition rather than *defeat by default* of ruling elites set adrift by a Gorbachev bent on reforming an irreversibly exhausted Soviet system.

---

26. This shortsightedness was not limited to the Soviet and East European opposition, but was also widespread in the West. See Ferenc Fehér and Andrew Arato eds., *The Gorbachev Debate* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1989). For an extensive critique, see Moishe Gonzales, "Exorcising *Perestroika*," in *Telos* 81 (Fall 1989), pp. 130-154.

27. The Romanian case seems to be an exception only if one overlooks the role of parts of the ruling elite in the uprising which, among other things, helps explain why much of the old ruling apparatus remains in power.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From Civil Society to Chaos

This point cannot be overemphasized. For obvious ideological reasons, it is resisted both by the previously mentioned Left critics who want to see these events as a victory of democracy (and, in some cases, even of an authentic socialism over its authoritarian travesty), as well as by Right and liberal scholars who mystify them as the unconditional capitalist victory of the Cold War. Soviet and East European regimes did not collapse because of political opposition from within, or economic and military pressures from without, but, in the case of Eastern Europe, because of the USSR's explicit decision to dismantle its empire and, in the case of the USSR itself, because of irreversible internal economic decline and the exhaustion of conditions necessary for its further reproduction. Because of the nature of the collapse of the Soviet regime, i.e., the exhaustion of its last vestiges of legitimacy as a result of the failure of Brezhnev's "historical compromise," both the communist regime and the system of central planning have become terminally discredited. Thus no reconstruction can take place on the basis of either a perpetuation of the present power structure, no matter how much democratization it undertakes, or a bureaucratically-mediated reorganization of the economy. This leaves residual ethnic, national and religious legitimacy as the most readily available alternative foundation for a post-communist regime.

Consequently, not only are the prospects for quantitative reforms of a socialism understood as the state organization of economic relations non-existent, but no real *perestroika* is likely to take place without the prior disintegration of the existing regime no matter what financial and technological assistence the West may provide. Because of the pathological mode of industrialization undertaken in the USSR, it is impossible to readily redirect the present system from one centrally controlled to one based on market relations without first reconstructing it altogether — a process conducive to severe *general* dislocations, despite the high technological sophistication of some of its specialized military sectors. Undertaking such a reconstruction within a context of a politically disintegrated empire will be further complicated by the fact that all other areas of Soviet life have also been contaminated by the same disease that has devastated the economy. Thus the economic crisis turns out to be only the tip of a much greater iceberg concealing major legitimation, motivation, rational and ecological crises.

Here it is essential to break sharply with the reading of the Soviet system as a static *totalitarian* one and recast the problems in terms of an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intrinsically unstable dictatorship constantly in need to recreate the basis of its own legitimacy as an *exceptional* regime. It is well-known that, to the extent the USSR has been such a regime for its entire history, it generated an equally exceptional mode of industrialization: one predicated on a state of exemption in general and military production in particular. This mode of production became necessarily bifurcated since it immediately had to distinguish between essential and non-essential production — a distinction which parallels all too closely Marx' classical separation in the second volume of *Capital* between the two main sectors of production: consumer goods or light industry, and production goods or heavy industry. Within a socialist version of this model, growth can take place primarily by investing in the second, since the first will normally benefit from it automatically. In a state of emergency, however, this automatic relation is broken and the second sector ends up colonialized by military imperatives while the first one thereby stagnates. Under conditions characterized as "the building of socialism" (understood as the construction of a minimal industrial infrastructure), the tendential stagnation was not as obvious as it became during Brezhnev's tenure when, unable and unwilling to restructure the system from extensive to intensive development, his social compromise simply sought to freeze indefinitely existing social and political relations. The result was the gradual erosion of the conditions essential for the system's own reproduction.

The predicament is further complicated by other factors. Ideally (but not in fact, since military production and other exceptional factors always interfere), under market conditions the two sectors should interpenetrate, be organized according to similar principles and, consequently, be responsive to changing market requirements. Such is not the case, even in principle, under conditions of state ownership of the means of production, central planning and, most important, a state of exemption or emergency. Within such a context, profitability is replaced by the fulfillment of quotas, relations among industries are mediated by the plan, and economic efficiency is supplanted by political imperatives. As a result, the distinction between the two sectors becomes reified into two *qualitatively* different systems with different resource allocations, wage-structures and even technical criteria. These systemic pathologies, however, can be tolerated only within a politically legitimate context whose ends justify the costs. The collapse of this teleology triggers a series of crises ultimately undermining every facet of the system.

Historically, the uninterrupted continuity of the USSR as a transitional

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

regime legitimated the perpetuation of these exceptional arrangments. From the very beginning, the project of rapid industrialization deemed necessary to defend "socialism in one country" against eventual "capitalist aggression" subsequently intensified with the war against Nazism, the Cold War and, finally, the drive to achieve military parity with the West after the Cuban missile crisis. All contributed to reifying the development of the Soviet industrial system along the two rigidly separate and unequally financed tracks, only one of which, the military, was in any sense "modern." Not only are there no meaningful technological transfers between the two types of industries, which contribute to immensely higher costs in the military and systematic backwardness in civilian industries, but even military industries tend to develop severe idiosyncratic pathologies.[28]

Since this type of emergency industrialization, like all military production, is only peripherally concerned with costs-effectiveness, it tends to be extremely conservative when it comes to new technologies and innovations. Unlike in the West, where innovations translating into greater and better production are almost automatically rewarded, such was not the case in the USSR. The central plan sets fixed quotas and assigns resources to meet them: exceeding these quotas or economizing in the use of resources only leads to a raising of the quotas and a lowering of the assigned resources with the next plan, without readily accruing any tangible benefits to the producers.[29] The results have been devastating: inefficiency, poor quality, shortages of material and parts, lack of inter-factory coordination, etc. All this was acceptable as long as the system operated within a legitimate context. When, after the inception of Brezhnev's "historical compromise," the earlier lofty goals of "building communism" or of "defending the motherland from foreign aggression" were displaced by more mundane economic imperatives, the internal ideological coherence disintegrated and the system entered its terminal crisis. Efforts to displace the old legitimating ideology with a new one predicated on stability, security and rational economic growth failed. Now it could no longer compete with the West by flaunting the ethical superiority of communism over the greed

28 Cf. Evgenii Kuznetsov and Felix Shirokov, "Problems of Conversion of Soviet Defense Industries," in *Telos* 81 (Fall 1989), pp. 52-60.

29 For an excellent account of the structural absurdities of Soviet central planning, see Antonio Carlo, "The Socio-Economic Nature of the USSR," in *Telos* 21 (Fall 1974), pp. 2-86. For a further analysis of how thus far *perestroika* has tended to intensify rather then eliminate these absurdities, see Antonio Carlo, "Contradictions of *Perestroika*," in *Telos* 79 (Spring 1989), pp. 29ff.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and selfishness of capitalism. The new tasks set forth by the Brezhnev compromise could not possibly be fulfilled within the existing socio-economic framework and even less match Western capitalism in the pursuit of similar goals. Since now the Soviet system cannot be readily marketized without first being dismantled, its future prospects are in at least one respect even worse than those of other Third World societies attempting to industrialize: unlike in the latter where it is merely a matter of standard industrialization, the USSR will have to first de-industrialize, i.e., dismantle most of the existing industrial system, before even beginning to re-industrialize on the basis of a depoliticized instrumental rationality.

This predicament is further complicated by the motivation crisis generated by the USSR's long period of abnormal industrialization under dictatorial conditions. As Zaslavsky shows,[30] one of the original goals of the Soviet dictatorship was the creation of a new anthropological type, *Homo Sovieticus*, as the appropriate subject of the communist classless society. Because this dictatorship failed in its task, it ended up creating a state-dependent type of worker: a traditional Oblomov unwilling to take risks, generally passive, lacking any personal initiative and work ethic, and concerned primarily with the kind of security promised and in some minimal sense delivered for decades by the system. Unlike the vigorous and resourceful peasants, who could be readily turned into productive workers during the early phases of industrialization in the West, the USSR's state-dependent worker is the least suitable for the sort of marketization and privatization required to reform the system and projected by Gorbachev's leadership. Far from being an asset for *perestroika*, this anthropological predicament promises to be one of the major obstacles to its successful implementation.

Contrary to standard Left efforts to seek salvation by the usual appeals to increased popular participation in decision-making and in broader economic equality,[31] during this massive process of socio-economic involution the politicization of the state-dependent working class can only be part of the problem. It is not likely to provide much political support for the marketization of the economy, the privatization of state property, or the constitution of new socio-economic relations. Rather, addicted to the minimal security hitherto provided by the state, the Soviet working class is likely to gravitate towards a coalition

30. Victor Zaslavsky, "Resistance to Reforms," unpublished paper.
31. Cf. Patrick Flaherty, "The Making of the New Soviet Left," in this issue of *Telos*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the conservative elements of the middle bureaucratic apparatus attempting to retain their jobs and privileges, and seek the perpetuation of state control of production and distribution.

During this period of economic dislocation, another problem looms on the horizon. As during the Weimar Republic in Germany, not only are the various opposition groups far apart in terms of concrete programs of social reconstruction but, because of the long history of repression and depoliticization of the Soviet populace, there is hardly any agreement concerning those fundamental values necessary for the effective working of a legitimate government enjoying broad popular support. The lack of traditions in political negotiations and compromises can only retard the formation of a sufficiently strong government coalition able to implement a radical and therefore painful program of reforms. This creates the conditions for indecisiveness and political paralysis contributing to the general disintegration. In such a context, even the equivalent of a Nazi solution to the Weimar crisis is not possible in the USSR *as a whole* (though it cannot be ruled out for the particular republics or groups of republics if and when they attain *de facto* independence). Today, the Soviet Union exhibits so much ethnic, religious and national heterogeneity as to rule out authoritarian movements such as *Pamyat* as credible national saviors for a substantial sector of the populace.

While the Soviet Union's Constitution now allows recourse to Presidential decrees, it is impossible to implement *perestroika* solely by constant recourse to such devices in a context lacking much broader legitimating support. The prospects, therefore, are for irreversible disintegration because, rather than in spite of greater politicization and participation by hitherto depoliticized social groups. Unlike most of Eastern Europe, where there is a long tradition of internal opposition, with the exception of solitary heroic figures such as Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov, the various oppositions in the USSR became politically significant only *after* the communist collapse. Consequently, they lack elaborate autonomous theoretical perspectives to contrapose to the regime's ideology and on the basis of which they can formulate alternative reform programs. Confronted with the need to reconstitute politics around credible legitimating structures and unwilling to fall back on the existing but discredited ones, they have only pre-modern traditions and customs to deploy as organizational principles. Since these principles can constitute, at best, only narrow particularist corporate interests difficult to universalize over a large heterogeneous polity,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

these new opposition groups will oppose any reforms predicated on even short-term austerity measures necessary to bring about long-term institutional changes such as the marketization of the economy. Thus, to the chagrin of the theorists of "civil society," democratization does not automatically pave the way for an opulent social-democratic society modeled after Sweden or Germany, but ushers in chaos, political paralysis, and rapid decline for the foreseeable future. Worse yet, the present regime has now lost all legitimation and cannot regain it merely by means of further democratization, since the latter presupposes a new mode of legitimation which further undermines the old one upon which the present regime still rests. Not only does there seem to be no light at the end of the tunnel, but there is not even agreement concerning the tunnel's exact location.

The "Dream" of an Authoritarian Perestroika

The realization that economic reforms are immensely more difficult to implement than anyone previously suspected has generated the so-called "authoritarian *perestroika* debate." Accordingly, Andranik Migranian and Igor Kliamkin have bluntly proposed to break the stalemate concerning economic reforms by scuttling for the time being any *de facto* obstructionist democratization and to reform the system by standard authoritarian means.[32] Departing from broad transhistorical generalizations concerning how democratic regimes in other countries have been traditionally established, they infer that such a shift in the USSR is possible only under the auspices of a strong central authority able to remove blockages to reforms by newly politicized interest groups and by institutionalizing conditions conducive to the development of a viable economic system. According to the theoreticians of such an authoritarian *perestroika*, democratic proceduralism can only constitute an obstacle to serious systemic reforms such as providing guarantees for private property, enforcing contracts and other market relations, as well as protecting civil liberties. A Soviet population already under considerable deprivation in comparison with Western standards can hardly be convinced to voluntarily underwrite its own further impoverishment for some mythical collective good alleged to follow an austerity sponsored by a discredited power structure. Thus Migranian can only envision a realistic transition to authoritarianism (as opposed to the present system he characterizes as "totalitarian")

32. Cf. "An Authoritarian *Perestroika*?," in this issue of *Telos*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rather than to democracy, for which today he sees the objective social conditions altogether absent.

Given the lack of better alternatives, Migranian ascribes the role of the strong central authority to none other than that very Communist Party universally held responsible for the crisis. The paradoxical conclusion is to rehabilitate a Party apparatus deeply embedded in the bureaucracy in order to suppress whatever democratic measures the Gorbachev leadership has managed to extract from that same apparatus in the presumably mistaken assumption that they were necessary preconditions for building popular support behind economic reforms. Such reforms run smack into strong opposition from the middle-range Party/bureaucratic politocracy, as occurred during the Khrushchev interlude. Aside from the naiveté presupposed in entrusting the deployment of radical reforms to that agency, the Party apparatus, likely to suffer significantly from their *honest* deployment or, conversely, likely to embezzle whatever remains during the process of privatization and marketization, the maneuver is doomed for other more serious structural reasons.

In a sense, such an authoritarian *perestroika* was attempted during the first couple of years of the Gorbachev regime and failed miserably. Predicated on the Marxist-Leninist assumption that a superstructural state apparatus had fallen out of step with an otherwise irrepressible progressive base, it sought primarily to rationalize the bureaucracy. It soon ran into the same problems that had frustrated Khrushchev a generation earlier: reform efforts were subverted by the bureaucracy as soon as they seemed to threaten its interests. Gorbachev wisely sought to avoid a similar fate by first building a base of support for *perestroika* through *glasnost* and the eventual politicization of a previously depoliticized populace. Yet, instead of galvanizing a solid bloc of support to deploy against an entrenched apparatus, the lifting of the repressive cloak has only uncovered an embattled society — not in the sense of an orderly polity of citizens and competing interest groups envisioned by Migranian and other ideologues of "civil society," but a Hobbesian *bellum omnium contra omnes* impossible to mobilize in any but the most irrational projects of nationalist, ethnic, religious or corporatist vindications.

In classical political theory this is precisely the predicament that, e.g., in Hobbes, gives rise to a strong central authority able to guarantee personal safety and the conditions for healthy social interaction. Unfortunately, the USSR is not starting out from any anthropological state of nature, but from seven decades of communism, which rule out the unfolding of the classical Hobbesian scenario for the present

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(but not necessarily for some future date, after the system's disintegration may very well reintroduce such a state of affairs). To be sure, Migranian is well aware of this predicament which, following Kirkpatrick's dubious distinction between "authoritarianism" and "totalitarianism," he uncritically accepts as "totalitarian." By this he means a system lacking a civil society understood not as what Western liberals, following ambiguous East European ex-dissidents' usages,[33] have recently rebaptized as *Zivilgesellschaft*, i.e., a society of free private individuals guaranteed civil and political rights,[34] but in the more traditional Marxist sense of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, i.e., a capitalist society with private property, enforced contracts, a free market, etc. There had never been such a society in Russia. Yet, as recent events have clearly shown, the USSR has always had its own brand of residual autonomous society, thriving independently of the state, which is neither capitalist nor liberal but, rather, *traditional*. This brand of society does not readily fit in

---

33. Along with seniority accumulated in a questionable *Begriffsgeschichte*, this is the source of the Western ex-Marxists' recycling of the concept of civil society, long since discredited not only by a state penetration which undermined its autonomy, but also by its traditional Marxist interpretation as *capitalist* society. Reminiscent of an earlier wave of disenchanted Marxists who sought to undermine the existing political hegemony in advanced industrial societies by importing incompatible and backward Third World models, the new civil society ex-Marxists import equally bankrupt Second World models with a similar theoretical/political objective. See Andrew Arato and Jean Cohen, "Politics and the Reconstruction of the Concept of Civil Society," in Axel Honneth *et al.*, eds., *Zwischenbetrachtungen im Prozeß der Aufklärung: Jürgen Habermas zum 60. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1989), p. 482.

34. Volker Gransow, "Zivilgesellschaft und Demokratische Frage," in *Das Argument*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (March-April 1990), pp. 249-254. The term *Zivilgesellschaft* is a new addition to the German language. The closest antecedent available is the seldom-used 18th century notion of *Zivilsozietät* mentioned in passing by Manfred Riedel. Its recent introduction in 1980, in connection with discussions of the Polish events in the German Left journal *Links*, was meant to distinguish the plethora of interest groups and voluntary associations operating independently of the state from the Marxist interpretation of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* as *capitalist* society. More recent usages refer primarily to juridical guarantees provided by the *Rechtsstaat* in contraposition to its complementary economic side. It is a matter of introducing into German a foreign linguistic peculiarity in order to legitimate a dubious theoretical distinction. The ideological objective is to keep a despised capitalism from contaminating, as it inevitably does, the more desirable political side of "civil society" by deploying wealth as a decisive political tool. See Arato and Cohen, Politics . . ." *op. cit.*, pp. 491-2 and 497. What is really at stake here is a liberalism embodying a *Rechtsstaat* or constitutional state that the new ideologists of civil society want to dissociate from capitalism but not from democracy — a political form not always necessarily supportive of this liberalism. This dissociation of democracy and liberalism explodes the myth of the axiomatically emancipatory character of civil society as both liberal *and* democratic, and thus of the possibility of deploying this concept as the foundation of a new social theory.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

standard development models or the Hegelian-Marxist framework. The theory of history implicit in the latter generates *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* as a transition between feudalism and socialism, where feudalism is associated with traditionalism. Since the USSR has already undergone a long phase of pathological industrialization and socialization, it is not only traditional, but also post-socialist. Thus the creation of the preconditions for the deployment of capitalism in the USSR — what Migranian really means when he uses confused concepts such as "civil society" — cannot be modeled after any other recently developed countries which have developed capitalist production processes and market-based distribution relations departing from merely traditional rather than heavily bureaucratized "socialist" societies. Within the context of a delegitimated central state, traditional residues in the Soviet Union can only help constitute a plurality of regional anti-liberal societies reluctant to sponsor a capitalism conducive to considerable social inequality, the marginalization of a large sector of the population, an initial lowering of the standards of living, severe unemployment, and a greatly intensified work-pace for those still employed.

Furthermore, it is not possible to uncritically associate, as Migranian does, Latin American countries such as Argentina, Chile and Brazil, with South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan as examples of countries which have successfully shifted from authoritarian to democratic regimes on the ground that they all met the condition of having a "civil society." The recent histories of these countries are quite different and difficult to subsume under any one easy formula. The Latin American countries that have democratized after a dictatorial phase have all had either incipient or more developed capitalist societies prior to the instauration of the dictatorship, so that this mode of democratization was essentially a *restauration* — the projected outcome of typical commissarial dictatorships to be discussed shortly. As for East Asian countries, democratization was also preceded by a rapid industrialization *carefully orchestrated by the state*. Especially in the case of the East Asian model,[35] such a development is predicated on the viability and legitimacy of a state apparatus able to steer the flow of investments and the direction of development following closely the logic of more

35. The case of South Korea is almost paradigmatic. As Amsden has shown, rapid development there was achieved by heavy reliance on gigantic family-owned conglomerates (*chaebol*) operating in close relation with a strong central state. Furthermore, when democratization does actually come, it creates economic disruptions and decelerates development. See Alice H. Amsden, *Asia's Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

technologically advanced societies. Neither the Latin American model of a commissarial dictatorship, nor the East Asian model of a traditional authoritarian interventionist state can be transposed to the Soviet context which lacks both a capitalist past that could be readily restored and the preconditions for a legitimate interventionist state. In the USSR, where there is yet no significant private sector, no free market, no integration with the world economy, no well developed but unreformable dual industrial system, attempting to follow the East Asian model translates into continuing roughly the kind of statist policies which have managed to bankrupt the Soviet economy. Third World and *post-socialist* traditional societies such as the USSR are not comparable, and what may work well in the first type may not in the second. Starting conditions are qualitatively different.

Kliamkin, however, sees it an advantage that the USSR is already in some sense industrialized. Allegedly, it will have an easier time modernizing than, e.g., Third World countries, since the shift will merely involve moving from one phase of industrialization to another. Aside from the fact that, with the possible exception of the now rapidly deteriorating military sector, the Soviet industrial apparatus is a massive rust belt impossible to integrate into the world system and in need of being scrapped altogether, collectivist industrialization is an *additional obstacle* rather than an advantage. As already indicated, instead of benefiting from a resourceful peasantry[36] ready to turn into a vigorous working class, the Soviet Union will have to start with an *exhausted* and lumpenized working class with terrible work habits and not at all convinced that the new capitalism is, from their viewpoint, an improvement over "socialism"; instead of a clean pre-industrial environment, the Soviet countryside is one of the world's most ecologically devastated; instead of a budding bourgeoisie ready to grow and expand, the USSR will have to recycle a class of corrupt, cynical and burned-out bureaucrats as the new capitalist and managerial elite. Compounded with the inevitable brain-drain which will ensue with the growing integration into the world economy, the USSR's prospects for rapid modernization are *worse* than those of many Third World countries.

At any rate, Migranian's real paradigm is neither Latin America nor East Asia but China. Even if one overlooks the fact that China may not be going anywhere with its reforms other than down the same road

36. For an excellent description of post-socialist Soviet peasants, see Lev Timofeev, *Soviet Peasants (or: The Peasant Art of Starving)*, trans. by Jean Alexander and Alexander Zaslavsky (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1985).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

undertaken by Khrushchev, such a transition is not likely to take place in the USSR. Because of an inordinate emphasis on dubious notions such as "civil society," understood more as *capitalist* than as *civil*. Migranian does not pay sufficient attention to political relations in general and, in particular, how dictatorships come about, where they derive their legitimacy, and how they relate to the societies they dominate. Given the history of the USSR — a history of seven decades of dictatorship and of several modifications in its character — it is extremely difficult for the Soviet Communist Party to copy the Chinese model and carry out an analogous program of economic modernization.

The Changing Character of the Soviet Dictatorship

Dictatorships are not all the same and they do not come into being in a vacuum. As Carl Schmitt pointed out, there are basically two kinds of dictatorship: a commissarial and a sovereign variety. The first is based on a *pouvoir constitué* and simply seeks to navigate a system through a particularly difficult period (the state of exception). Consequently, it temporarily suspends constitutional provisions and legality only to reestablish them at a later date when the danger is past. The second is based on a *pouvoir constituant* and is meant to usher in a qualitatively new social order, after which it presumably disappears.[37] When applied to the Soviet regime understood as a *dictatorship* rather than as a totalitarian system, a mere despotism, or the Anti-Christ, this distinction helps understand why Migranian's proposal is impossible to implement.

In a nutshell, Migranian proposes to transform the Soviet Communist Party's rule into a sovereign dictatorship entrusted with ushering in a capitalist system as a precondition for genuine democratization. For this, however, it needs a *pouvoir constituant*. Which *pouvoir constituant* today is likely to entrust the Party with such a task other than a few confused authoritarian intellectuals? And even if such a constituency could be found, the Party still could not carry out this task. The political system

37. Carl Schmitt, *Die Diktatur* (Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 1978). For a parallel interpretation which relabels Schmitt's distinction between commissarial and sovereign dictatorships as "ancient" and "modern," see Norberto Bobbio, *Democracy and Dictatorship: The Nature and Limits of State Power*, trans. by Peter Kennaly (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp. 158ff. Related distinctions between Left and Right dictatorships, or between authoritarian and totalitarian ones are significantly different from Schmitt's. Both Left and Right dictatorships can be commissarial as well as sovereign, while the totalitarian/authoritarian distinction, to the extent that no regime can ever be totalitarian in the sense meant by the proponents of the totalitarian thesis, boils down to the false claim that the second can change while the first cannot. Neither of these two essentially metaphorical distinctions is sufficiently rigorous for analytical purposes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

left by Brezhnev was a despotism weary of utopian dreams of "true communism" and no longer clear about its possible status as a commissarial dictatorship entrusted by the New Class of politocrats to *normalize* a situation of objective class domination following the fall of Khrushchev. Whatever direction it may have chosen, the regime was inextricably tied to the New Class of conservative politocrats uninterested in any significant changes in the *status quo*.

To be sure, Bolshevik Party rule did begin as a sovereign dictatorship (*over* and not *of* the proletariat) pledged to bring about a classless society. In the 1930s, however, in the wake of scores of failures on all fronts, instead of admitting the bankruptcy of Leninist ideology Stalin sought to uphold it by blaming the failures on convenient scapegoats — his political competitors. In doing so, he *suspended* the earlier project of sovereign dictatorship to create a new society in order to clean house and *restore* conditions conducive to the completion of the original project. This meant the transformation of the previous sovereign dictatorship into a commissarial one when he began to physically annihilate that part of the Bolshevik leadership still ideologically committed to the classless society. What was crucial at the time and insured a continuity of leadership was that Stalin carried out such a shift in order to consolidate the power of the bulk of the Bolshevik Party now entrenched in a bureaucratic apparatus which, in the meantime, had swelled into a New Class *de facto* ruling over all of society.[38] The objective was to stabilize a regime threatened by imaginary but highly functional "internal enemies" who had allegedly sabotaged the revolutionary project. As such, they were eliminated during the Great Purges understood as a temporary state of exemption beginning with the Kirov assassination. The Terror was a state of exemption to the extent that Stalin sought to restore the conditions conducive to the constitution of a communist society — a project that had been allegedly subverted by internal enemies and other external foes.[39]

Stalin's legitimating constituency during this period did remain fairly stable, since that part of the New Class that asserted itself with the Purges was drawn overwhelmingly from the politicized and upwardly

38. Gabor Rittersporn carefully documents this process in "Stalin in 1938," in *Telos* 46 (Winter 1980-81), pp. 6-42.

39. The instauration of the new Constitution in 1936 — something commissarial dictatorships cannot do — does not alter the nature of Stalin's shift from a sovereign to a commissarial dictatorship since that document was purely *pro forma* and had no impact on *Realpolitik*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mobile proletarian masses that had made possible the survival of the Bolshevik revolution during the civil war and had been rewarded for it by moving up into the middle-level positions of the new bureaucratic/political apparatus. Subsequently, WWII and then the Cold War provided convenient justifications for the perpetuation of that state of exemption the new commissarial dictatorship needed to rule unchallenged up to the rise of Khrushchev, when the famous secret speech in 1956 effectively marked the exhaustion of its mandate. Thus Khrushchev's failed reform was an attempt to reverse the commissarial dictatorship into a sovereign one entrusted to create a qualitatively new society that would eventually "bury the West." Khrushchev, however, did not make sure that its power base remained solidly behind him in the process. When what during Stalin's rule had become the new *pouvoir constitué*, the Party-state apparatus, showed itself reluctant to self-destruct into an undefined *pouvoir constituant*, contributing to the loss of their *nomenklatura* privileges in return for vague promises of the general economic well-being to be brought about by "true communism," Khrushchev lost his support.

Brezhnev's counter-revolution found itself in a peculiar predicament. Although it sought to re-establish the *status quo ante* by scuttling peaceful coexistence with the 1968 Czech invasion, it found it impossible to simply recycle Stalinism as a commissarial dictatorship after Khrushchev's revelations had effectively delegitimated it. This was done not only by exposing its horrible excesses, but more importantly by exhausting its mandate with the new policy of "peaceful coexistence" towards the West. The capitalist threat could no longer be deployed to legitimate a new state of exemption, and Brezhnev had absolutely no intention of bringing about any new communist society — a project which could conceivably have warranted a sovereign dictatorship. At any rate, Khrushchev's efforts to reinstate a neo-Leninist sovereign dictatorship was precisely what the new regime was meant to exorcize. Consequently, it deteriorated into a cynical and increasingly corrupt despotism committed neither to restoring a previous state of normality nor to bringing about a new society. Instead, it merely maintained the *status quo* by institutionalizing a new social compromise with the state-dependent working class created by the previous half century of "socialism" — a working class lacking motivation, initiative, and readily willing to forfeit civil/political liberties in exchange for basic amenities and vague promises of gradual improvements in overall living standards. In a situation where extensive development had reached its outer

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

limit with the exhaustion of human and natural resources, and unable to launch intensive development without simultaneously undertaking radical reforms, Brezhnev's regime managed to keep its promises by further exhausting its once plentiful natural resources, by taking advantage of the two major oil crises during the 1970s which translated into a windfall of trillions of dollars for the oil-exporting Soviet economy, and by neglecting any but the most necessary modernizations of its social and industrial infrastructures.

Drained morally and fiscally by the Afghanistan fiasco, by the time Gorbachev came to power the Soviet economy was literally out of gas. Brezhnev's social contract could no longer be fulfilled and it was impossible to relegitimate either a commissarial or a sovereign dictatorship. It was unthinkable to seek the restoration of a "normal" *status quo ante* since that could have meant only the re-launching of the Leninist project. It was equally impossible to reinterpret the international situation as so threatening as to warrant a state of exemption legitimating a commissarial dictatorship. Gorbachev's deployment of *glasnost* was thus not merely a technocratic cynical maneuver to generate popular support for reforms to reactivate a terminally stagnant economy by modernizing a recalcitrant bureaucratic apparatus, but also an effort to reconsider the nature of the system. To the extent that he underestimated the degree of the society's internal involution, Gorbachev unwittingly precipitated the irreversible changes spelling the end of the era of Communist Party domination in the USSR.

Migranian's "dream" of an authoritarian *perestroika* is thus just that, not because of the reasons he adduces, but because the Party is doomed as a legitimate Soviet institution. Even if it were not, it could not bring about the required capitalist marketization and reconstruction of the industrial infrastructure without eliminating itself as the main obstacle to such a project. As a *communist* Party, it would not only have to at least minimally defend the interests of the working class it has pretended to represent since even before 1917, but also those of the Party members entrenched in that planning bureaucracy that will have to be destroyed. Unlike in China, where the present regime has been in power less than half as long and still functions in some sense as a sovereign dictatorship committed to modernize the country into a new kind of advanced industrial society, such an option has long since been exhausted in the USSR with the overthrow of Khrushchev. Even fears of a military dictatorship are, at this point in time, the product of uninformed paranoia not only because the Soviet military is no longer technically or logistically able to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

carry out such a project (even if it wanted to), but also because a military dictatorship would have neither a minimal constituency behind it nor any idea concerning what to do in the present chaos — as Jaruzelski's experience in the early 1980s clearly shows.

The Soviet paradox today is roughly that the system needs a strong constitutional framework as a precondition for radical reforms, i.e., the institutionalization of capitalism and all of its juridical preconditions, such as the guarantee of the private ownership of the means of production, civil rights, the enforcement of binding contracts, etc. This is likely to be *democratically* checkmated precisely by those newly politicized sectors of "civil society" most likely to be negatively affected by these reforms.[40] The resulting political stalemate will probably generate an interminable debate concerning absurd oxymorons such as "market socialism" envisioned as a Soviet version of a German or Swedish type of social democracy. To the extent that the transition to such a model shortcircuits the dismantling of the present regime by merely modifying many of its existing structures, old pathologies such as corruption, incompetence, inefficiency etc. will remain, thus perpetuating the conditions responsible for the system's disintegration. The most likely prospect is further disintegration of the whole as the necessary purgatory for regional reconstitution of the conditions eventually conducive to capitalist development.

---

40. This is a paradigmatic case of the conflict between liberalism and democracy which liberal democrats do not normally confront in democratic societies with long traditions of constitutional freedoms. For developing countries, or countries which have to devolve before re-developing, it becomes crucial. See Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, *op. cit.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Postcommunism in the USSR: The McGulag Archipelago

Tim Luke

Recent unanticipated events in the USSR necessitate rethinking Marx's materialist conception of history. This, however, does not mean forgetting him altogether. His metanarrative may be dead, but it is still moving. Paradoxically, it seems to reverse its time-sequence in practice. That is, in stage-skipping into the future through Stalin's "socialist" transition the USSR ironically ends up flipping backwards into the past. The key question facing the disintegrating USSR today is where will most or all of its fragments stop: capitalism, feudalism, oriental despotism, primitive society?

Admittedly, Marx's road map to communism was always vague. Yet it postulated that feudal Europe had seen the development of capitalism from within its cities that gradually evolved into the crisis-ridden industrial phase in which modern European societies faced the prospect of leaping into socialism. This universalist account of historical change became the benchmark against which Lenin calibrated the trajectory for a revolution in Tsarist Russia. The Russian revolutionary upheaval would combine the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions into one. Skipping capitalism and bourgeois democracy, Soviet Russia would leap directly into socialism. Almost from the beginning, however, Lenin's revolution did not turn out either as he had expected or as Marx had forecast. With the First Five Year Plan, all the original projections for revolutionary[1]

1. See Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of the Cold War* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), and Tim Luke, *Ideology and Soviet Industrialization* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1985).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

social change were forgotten in the headlong rush to industrialize. In fact, beginning in October 1917 the Bolshevik Revolution has run Marx' historical materialism backwards. Communism came first: it did not linger off in the distant future. Despite many flaws, from 1918 to 1921 radical Bolshevik social experiments constituted the most advanced phase of communist relations, which soon eased back into a pluralist, inchoate phase of *socialism* during the NEP period. With Stalin's rise to power after 1928, however, there was a definite *dictatorship of* (over) *the proletariat* that lasted at least until the 20th Congress in 1956.

The essentially state capitalist design of Stalinism, in which the *nomenklatura* emerged as a technobureaucratic staff for the Party-state, reproduced many of the key institutions needed for developing bourgeois capitalism. These institutions survived the revolution and collectivization. Obviously, they were also poorly planned, inadequately funded, typically inaccessible, seriously mismanaged, and completely inegalitarian. After all, the Stalinist bureaucracy was not the most proficient architect for designing such assets. Nonetheless, such structures were built and universalized across much of the old Tsarist empire, Eastern Europe and even Asia by Soviet invasions or national liberation movements during WWII. From 1956 to 1985, then, there has been a *general crisis* in the neo-Stalinist regime precipitated by many foreign threats and internal subversion of this irrational system of rule. Trapped between moribund Stalinist industrialization policies and still-born Khrushchevian intensive development reforms, after 1964 the USSR slipped deeper and deeper into Brezhnevite stagnation.[2] The Gorbachev years of 1985-1990 have only seen the climax of this festering crisis.

By 1989, the crisis exploded in the USSR and Eastern Europe, bringing into power nonsocialist ideological agendas. Consequently, history now is moving from the dictatorship of the proletariat to *industrial capitalism*. This shift, in turn, has not led to the demise of the state, but rather to the withering away of the Communist Party. Obviously prepared to embrace both more fully rationalized industrial capitalism and more popularly elected forms of government, Eastern European nations and the USSR are opening up their economies to the world market as the immiseration of their proletarians intensifies. At the same time, velvet and violent revolutions are seeing the spare beginnings of formal judicial systems, individual rights, a free press, alternative political parties, open elections, and the surrender of power by Communist

2. Victor Zaslavsky, *The Neo-Stalinist State* (White Plains, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1982); and, A.J. Polan, *Lenin and the End of Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

authorities.[3] The July 1990 28th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, which voted to ratify the proposal to give up the Party's constitutionally guaranteed monopoly on power, accept the emergence of competing political parties, and the move toward a presidential system of government separate from direct party control, simply ratified *de jure* what had already become *de facto* features on the Soviet political landscape. Gorbachev's turn to parliamentary democracy and multiparty political pluralism, the Russian Republic's endorsement of Stanislav Shatalin's "500 Days" plan for making a rapid transition to a market system confirms the Soviet Union's entry into industrial capitalism. By privatizing state property, setting up markets, opening up to foreign investment, and encouraging individual entrepreneurialism, Shatalin's plan might take hold in a few localities as a viable experiment, but it seems unlikely to move the USSR into capitalism. After six decades of using state power to crush market forces, personal initiative, private ownership, and capitalist exchange, the micrological character structures and immediate social capillaries required for carrying such economic traffic simply do not exist.

The culture of economic irrationality and apolitical passivity engendered by Stalinism stands in the way of any significant advance. The prospects of industrial capitalism are severely limited by the dual civil-military economy.[4] Responding to the dictates of state ministries rather than market forces, the factories and farms of the USSR are a crazy patchwork of unstandardized plants producing nonuniform products in accord with various bureaucratic standards of quality and quantity that cannot begin to collaborate profitably. Few military factories can be converted to produce civilian goods, most civilian enterprises use ancient technology, and practically all farms lack any rational productive organization. Ironically, the Shatalin plan proposes to sell these bankrupt enterprises to the Soviet people for their valueless ruble savings, ensuring that their worthless investments will go belly-up as their incompetent management fails to produce or sell any kind of marketable products. The handful that succeed will be worth keeping, while foreign investors might be induced to supplant all the rest as long as some semblance of civil peace remains. Yet, as this "new wager on the strong" is made, it is likely that massive economic failures will

3. See Anders Aslund, *Gorbachev's Struggle for Economic Reform: The Soviet Reform Process, 1985-1988* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

4. For more detailed discussion, see Evgenii Kuznetsov and Felix Shirokov, "Problems of Conversion of Soviet Defense Industries," *Telos* 81 (Fall 1989), pp. 52-60.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quickly implode what is left of many union republic's civil peace.

Following Marx' model in reverse does not mean that the USSR is destined to evolve into primitive society. Yet there are no guarantees that it will hover indefinitely in the phase of industrial capitalism. As the Shatalin plan is implemented, and as the All-Union system fragments into 15 or more semi-autonomous jurisdictions, the key question will be which pieces can hang on industrial capitalism while others face the prospect of sliding into feudalism or oriental despotism, especially in Soviet Central Asia. The revitalization of radical Islamic fundamentalism, bloody ethnic clashes, co-op bashing, and religious pogroms are already providing some glimpses into the new phases of running historical materialism backwards. After three generations of Communist rule, the state is seen as nothing more than an organized apparatus used by a small, urban-intellectual, Russian elite to exploit the fruits of an empire. Like most of postimperial Africa, many Soviet territories may splinter into small, dysfunctional ethnonational regions ruled by corrupt states for the benefit of Moscow or other outside forces. Returning to almost tribalistic ethnic identities, resurrecting traditional religious authorities, revitalizing authoritarian forms of cultural control, and reproducing complex dependencies on European, American and Japanese capital, these newly decolonized systems soon are likely to see the rise of regimes on par with those of President Zia, Idi Amin, Mobutu or Ayatollah Khomeini as they drift in and out of strange institutional amalgams of primitive accumulation, manufacture and feudalism.

If the USSR does not explode into civil war and if *perestroika* finally reforms the Soviet economy, what are the prospects of its integration into the global economy? Plainly, the willing acceptance of Western investments by the Gorbachev regime carries many liabilities. One of the most serious is ecological disaster. Ironically, one week before the opening of the CPSU Central Committee plenum that wrote the "Towards a Human, Democratic Socialism" draft Party platform placing the USSR on the road to pluralism, capitalism, and individualism, the American fast food industry opened an outlet only three blocks from the Kremlin.

On January 31, 1990, McDonald's opened its first and largest restaurant in Moscow. The first of twenty units to open in the USSR in the next few years, the Moscow McDonald's is identical, except perhaps in scale, to any other. In keeping with previous waves of foreign investment in the USSR, none of the technology and very little of the production cycle, except for some raw materials, have any domestic content. Instead, McDonald's has had to import everything it needs from

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Western Europe, Scandinavia and the US, to an immense $35 million high-security dairy, baking and meat-processing facility outside Moscow. Complete with its own guards and barbed wire fences, this "McGulag" is the first of many new ecologically-problematic sites in the USSR to import waste-intensive, environmentally-destructive and nutritionally-questionable Western goods into Soviet society. It is a telling commentary on the Soviets' current plight that even McDonald's is light years ahead of any indigenous alternative and, in many ways, a revolutionary improvement in the Soviet food industry. The McGulag represents both a great leap forward and a giant step backward. Consequently, other Western food industry groups, like Pizza Hut (which opened its first two Moscow outlets on September 11, 1990, the same day the Supreme Soviet saw Gorbachev endorse the Shatalin "500 Days" plan) are being welcomed. At the same time, these new industries extend the clorofluorocarbon-based packaging, the monoproduct farming and animal husbandry system, and high-salt, high-fat, high-cholesterol diet of contemporary America into yet another small, off-shore enclave of privileged consumers. Thus, at 3.85 rubles a Bolshoi Mak, Soviet workers must work almost half a day for their meal versus 20 minutes for an American to order his Big Mac.

Beyond fast food, other consumer goods associated with Western-style modernity will also be imported into the USSR. Personal automobiles are the major cause of neighborhood destruction, urban pollution and energy waste in Western societies. Already several American, European and Japanese firms are cutting new contracts to manufacture cars in Poland, Hungary and Romania, and Fiat has signed a deal for a factory that will turn out 300,000 more autos a year in the USSR. Raising car ownership levels in the USSR only to those of Spain would increase world oil consumption by 3%. Automobiles, of course, are a key reward promised to workers by global Fordism, and the USSR is no exception. So here also, Westernization via automobilization will constitute an immense new ecological and urban disaster.

Having built an urban-industrial system using extensive methods of development, the USSR is in crisis since further development can take place only through intensive methods of development that presume the destruction of the extensive growth model's political *sine qua non*, the Communist Party's bureaucratic centralism. *Perestroika* is not a systematic analysis of objective needs as much as a jury-rigged justification by a panic-stricken leadership. Although Gorbachev has given the USSR a new legislature and foreign policy, *perestroika* has not filled

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the stores and warehouses. In fact, in material economic terms, everything has deteriorated since 1985. On this level, it is a complete failure.[5] Yet, unlike the autarkic Stalinist model of extensive growth, these new economic arrangements consciously aim at reducing the role of the Communist Party.[6] By integrating the USSR into the world economy, Gorbachev hopes to use the best available science and technology to evince the superior qualities of Soviet "socialism" over Western "capitalism" (as he remakes "socialism" with capitalism). As in China from 1978 to 1989, however, unintended consequences will show how obsolete the Party has become as a decision-making agency.[7]

Of course, *perestroika* does not mean buying into *laissez-faire* capitalism; instead, it implies the McGulag. Discredited by his recent failures, Gorbachev now wages a new struggle aimed at importing the same corporate criteria of success used by transnational capital to reform the USSR. By giving foreign firms such access, this policy also implies returning to open direct dependence on foreign capital and expertise. To succeed, the *nomenklatura* will have to die and be reborn as either an *haute bourgeoisie* or core technostructure — as it is already trying to do in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the former East Germany — to survive the demise of bureaucratic centralism. Finally, these shifts also underscore how much the USSR's main economic attraction to the outside world is now essentially "ecological," i.e., the same as that of a resource rich, cheap labor semi-periphery with little real negotiating room to protect its environmental heritage or past social achievements.

To take these steps, Gorbachev — like the externally certified dictator of any banana republic — is marketing himself as the reliable sales agent of this transformation. Some of his restructuring projects already look as if they had been designed by the IMF or the World Bank as he works to make the USSR appear more trustworthy as an equal partner in the global economy. With himself as political collateral, which the Western world's financial markets already have implicitly certified with their trading behavior on different market days as they catch rumors of his possible demise or promotion, Gorbachev is commodifying the economic promise of the USSR for outside bidders. These developmental strategies are encoded in the deepest structures of the Soviet economy, antedating the 1917 October revolution. Thus, Gorbachev's *perestroika*

5. Antonio Carlo, "Contradictions of *Perestroika*," *Telos* 79 (Spring 1989), pp. 29-46.
6. See Lucio Leante, "*Perestroika* at a Snail's Pace," *Telos* 80 (Summer 1989), pp. 79-92.
7. For more discussion, see Tim Luke, "The Other 'Global Warming': The Impact of *Perestroika* on the US," *Telos* 81 (Fall 1989), pp. 30-40.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

marks only the latest official admission of the USSR's real status as an underdeveloped superpower and the starkest outlines of its semi-peripheral global economic niche, extending back to the era of Peter I.

Even more ironically, there is a strange new formula for a *comprador* "communism" within *perestroika*. Fulfilling their wildest dreams, the communist *nomenklatura*, or that small fraction composing its most talented cadres, might become employees in the McGulag as the vanguard of a new "capitalist technostructure," while another misguided conservative faction fights a rearguard action for neo-Stalinism. Like the ruling cadres in postimperial African, Asian, Middle Eastern or Latin American states, the current bureaucratic personnel in the various union republics have an opportunity to control access to, and thus derive an income from, "the action" in these new markets. The paradoxical quality of these shifts merit cautionary quotes. If civil war or public disorder spread, no one will invest in the USSR. Moreover, if this middleman game works, the Communist Party will disappear. If the Party does survive, these collaborationist communists could change it into something like the one-party systems of PRI in Mexico, India's Congress Party, or even the LDP in Japan. Or, if the Shatalin experiment delivers any actual economic payoffs and Gorbachev continues to gather power while Yeltsin and others renounce their membership to form new agencies further weakening Party institutions, then the Party may wither away, leaving Gorbachev or his successors as authoritarian modernizers like Ataturk, the Shah of Iran, Chiang Kai-shek or General Franco, Or, if civil strife and economic stagnation continue, the rural economy may return to more subsistence modes of production, while the cities plug into postimperial transnational networks like Lagos, Khartoum, Lima and Karachi, bringing the various autonomous union republic governors down to the level of Third and Fourth World kleptocrats stealing from foreigners and their subjects alike — all in the name of "modernization" and "development."

The shift of some one-time Party bureaucrats and professional dissident intellectuals into post-communist politicos and corporate managers for foreign capital in Eastern Europe may prefigure similar changes in the more developed regions of the USSR. Opening these economies to foreign trade alone creates thousands of opportunities for clever *apparatchiki* to acquire a new "bourgeois" status in serving all across the McGulag as "front-men" for international corporations. Privatizing state property would create immense commercial opportunities with similar potential for class transformation. With only

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

700,000 official enterprises on the books, compared with over 17 million in the US, converting these concerns to private or cooperative ownership will not be an insurmountable task, particularly for the 50,000 industrial enterprises that stand at the commanding heights of the Soviet economy.[8] As the socialist society's ruling elite, the *nomenklatura* is the most favorably positioned group to acquire controlling interests and exercise managerial oversight in this commercializing economy. Already well-trained in all forms of corrupt wheeling-and-dealing as well as showing individual initiative in coping with the vast underground economy, the intellectual strata constituting a considerable fraction of the Communist Party have much to gain from such a policy of pragmatic modernization. Yet the overall Soviet economic situation is disastrous and worsening. Many *apparatchiki* will never be able to make this cultural leap to the new open economy. Instead, they will continue defecting to the various informal splinter groups further blocking the already serious paralysis of *perestroika*.

The McGulag is the intrusion of the West's technologically rational, ecologically destructive and culturally impoverishing forms of everyday life into the USSR's plans for managing its modernization. On top of what have already been some of the world's worst ecological excesses and cultural destruction inflicted by extensive growth under Stalinist central planning, the Soviet Union now faces the tremendous costs of intensive growth in opening up to everything that now threatens Western societies from within: mass marketing, global Fordism, and energy-intensive modernity.[9] Until 1990, nearly a sixth of the earth's surface, much of its natural resources, and 290 million people were largely untouched by these cycles of transnational production. Extending this unsustainable style of everyday life into the USSR prefigures an environmental disaster as serious as the "pragmatic modernization" of Brazil, Indonesia or sub-Saharan Africa, already widely decried as ecological catastrophes everywhere. This eventuality is being occluded by the intense media coverage given to "really existing" ecological catastrophes in the USSR. Tampering with the Aral Sea and its tributaries as well as the Chernobyl disaster are only two of the most obvious environmental problems caused by rapid Stalinist industrialization.[10]

8. Richard Parker, "Inside the 'Collapsing' Soviet Economy," *Atlantic*, 265 (June 1990), pp. 68-80.

9. Tim Luke, "Radical Ecology and the Crisis of Political Economy," *Telos* 46 (Winter 1980-81), pp. 97-101.

10. For additional analysis, see Boris Komarov, *The Destruction of Nature in the Soviet Union* (White Plains, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1980).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

While presenting itself as ecologically concerned, transnational corporate capitalism is not going to provide many environmentally-sensitive solutions for these problems. Just as the rain forests, oil reserves, and exotic wildlife of Brazil, Indonesia, and sub-Saharan Africa are disappearing at dangerously high annual rates of destruction to fuel the import-driven core economies of transnational capital, so too will the Soviet Union's natural bounty be taken at unsustainable levels of exploitation to drive prosperity in a reunited Germany, the European Community, and Japan. Occasionally, as elsewhere abroad, the replacement of "socialist democracy" by "consumer sovereignty" may bring some minimal sense of "conservationism," especially if *glasnost* perpetuates a spirit of ecological awareness and the creation of institutionalized environmental pressure groups. Nevertheless, these weak forms of popular resistance will not end the egregious ecological damage already inflicted by state socialism, nor will they contain the environmentally regulated ravaging of the Soviet Union's ecology soon to come in the name of *perestroika*.

Like Brazil or India, the USSR, if its growth is managed rationally, could develop a significant consumer economy for perhaps 10 to 15% of its population on par with world consumption standards. The McGulags being constructed to service this smaller consumer enclave, as they already do in most overseas locations, will concentrate on a handful of affluent urban consumers. The millions of others left behind in the countryside will be left to fend for themselves as private producers, co-op members, or agribusiness employees. In turn, as Soviet farming, forestry and mining are commercialized, these industries will become increasingly locked into monocrop production cycles to supply the much more rapidly developing cities in the major union republics or foreign export markets.

The Gorbachev regime's *perestroika* cannot be realized as planned or announced in Marxist-Leninist terms. Such moves may have worked in the 1960s. Now it is far too late. Today these proclamations simply mask the apparently more real outcome of *perestroika*: the rapid uncoupling of many new smaller nationalist states from the once united Soviet Union. Whether or not these states survive in relative peace or begin to quarrel with one another as in Central Europe after the collapse of the Hapsburg and Hohenzollern empires in 1917-1918 or as in the Middle East after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, remains to be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seen.[11] From the Russian and Ukrainian republics to the tiny Baltic states, however, each area's national "civil society" is full of interests pushing and pulling for their own autonomous economic, cultural and political life. Indeed, all of the makings of a Super Lebanon, spanning eleven time-zones, is already coming to a slow boil. These crises have few real immediate solutions, and capitalism is bound to create more chaos than order. It took decades for the USSR to dig itself into the miseries of this deep hole, and it will take many more decades to climb all of the way out — if it ever does.

---

11. The USSR will keep its nuclear weaponry and conventional military forces to underwrite its political stability and maintain some integrity within its borders. At the same time, however, it continues to remain a developing nation with all the systemic problems characteristic of many such regimes, including economic inequality, ethnic unrest, class conflict, dual economies, culture shock, and political instability. Should the USSR attempt to tighten its grip over all its far-flung territories militarily, or turn to "the Romanian variant" as a crowd control strategy, then the number and composition of the various military units mixed and matched for ethnic correctness will soon exceed the capacity of the state to respond. But if the Party and the security organs are dismantled, then who will control the nuclear deterrents accumulated during the Cold War? Perhaps the USSR will be the first state to have a nuclear civil war as the entrenched Russian/Brezhnevite establishment faces increasing resistance from "nationalist, separatist and anti-socialist" opposition groups exercising their new-found civil rights and political autonomy in the wasteland of post-Stalinist Soviet society.

Political Argument

A Reissue with a New Introduction
BRIAN BARRY
First published in 1965, *Political Argument* has come to be recognized as occupying a key position in the revival of Anglo-American political philosophy. A number of the ideas introduced by Barry have become part of the standard vocabulary. For this long-awaited reprint, Barry has prepared a substantial, new introductory essay.
California Series on Social Choice and Political Economy
$45.00 cloth, $13.95 paper

Can Modernity Survive?

AGNES HELLER
Here Heller distills the essence of a political and philosophical standpoint worked out over the course of a productive and illustrious career. This work serves as an introduction to her extensive *oeuvre.*
"Bound to become the centre and the starting point of all future discourse on modernity."—Zygmunt Bauman
$25.00

At bookstores or order toll-free 1-800-822-6657. Visa & MasterCard only.
University of California Press
Berkeley 94720

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*Preconditions for Soviet Economic Development**

Luciano Pellicani

In a television speech broadcast May 27, 1990 Gorbachev sent a message to the Soviet people which essentially claimed: "Only the market can save us." He argued "The market is necessary for radically reforming our economy, for paving the way for enterprises, for the economic independence of worker collectives and of every worker and citizen. . . . The introduction of the market has to create conditions that reward those who work well and productively: the market must help resolve the problems we have been debating for ten years, i.e., how to encourage creative labor which is productive and efficient, and punish indolent workers with lower wages."[1] Then he asked: Why has the Soviet government waited so long before openly admitting that only by restoring the market can the Soviet Union escape scientific, technological, and economic stagnation? His answer was that only now, with the creation of the "juridical preconditions" for an economy based on private enterprise, competition, and profit, can the USSR turn to the market. These juridical preconditions are the "fundamental laws concerning property, rent, and land."[2]

What this amounts to is, first of all, the public dismissal of the fundamental model around which Marx and Lenin built the communist alternative, i.e., that the "central plan" governing production and distribution, meant to exempt economic life from the "anarchy of the market," paved the way for the harmonious development of the forces

* Translated by Florindo Volpacchio

1. Mikhail Gorbachev, "Rivoluzione di Mercato," in *L'Espresso*, No. 23 (1990), p. 74.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of production. This possibility does not even generate a critical denial from Gorbachev, and with good reason. History has shown that a "planned economy" is a contradiction in terms. If production and distribution are regulated administratively, independently of the market, it makes no sense to speak of an economy, if by the economy one means not the simple production of commodities but the rational distribution of scarce resources. Such a rational distribution is possible only with a flood of information about the scarcity of resources which, in turn, can be obtained only by means of the pricing mechanism of the market. Thus a mode of production without a market allows and in fact demands economic operators, i.e, the State as the central planner, sole owner of the means of production, to operate blindly. It is inherently devoid of rationality, since it is structured in such a way as to render economic calculation impossible. Furthermore, it is a system without incentives, since it eliminates profit, which not only increases the degree of rationality of investments, but also what drives people to perform as well as they can. History has shown that Marx and Lenin were wrong and that Mises and Weber were right. It has shown even more that Proudhon was right. Although a severe critic of capitalism, he was the first to see clearly that the elimination of competition also means the elimination of the economy.[3]

Gorbachev's second point was that the expression "market economy" is redundant. By definition, an economy is always a market economy. The rationality found in the various means of production which have succeeded themselves historically is proportional to the space they have allowed to that "law of value" Engels argued had to be abolished since it was "bourgeois."[4] This law can operate only within a market and eliminate arbitrariness from processes of production and distribution by becoming subject to the impersonal imperatives of economic rationality. This explains why Arturo Labriola claimed that "economic life shows itself as reality only with the appearance of capitalism."[5] No matter what one thinks of the system of free enterprise, it cannot be

3. Cf. Luciano Pellicani, "L'Anti-Economia Collecttivistica," in *Il Socialismo del Futuro*, no. 2 (1990), forthcoming.

4. Within communist societies, it is written in *Anti-Dühring*, "The useful effects of the various articles of consumption, compared with one another and with the quanties of labour required by their production, will in the end determine the plan. People will be able to manage everything very simply, without the intervention of much-vaunted 'value'." See Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring, Herr Eugen Düring's Revolution in Science*, second edition (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1959), p. 427.

5. Arturo Labriola, *Capitalismo*, (Naples: Morano, 1926), p. 15.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

denied that "capitalist enterprises finally realize the full commensurability of ends and means, the calculation all the elements involved, the maximization of profit as the only objective. The principle of economic rationality is thus fully applied."[6]

Gorbachev's third point is that the marketization of production and distribution processes is unimaginable without juridical preconditions. In other words, the rebirth of an economy based on supply and demand presupposes the protection of private property and the guarantee that profits accrued will not be "intercepted" by public powers. A market economy is possible only if citizens can expect that their property will not be expropriated and that their earnings will not be taken away by the state.

What is missing from Gorbachev's speech, however, is the most important element: the political preconditions for marketization. It is not enough to re-legitimate profits and to allow private individuals access to state property. Above all, it is also necessary to guarantee that the ideological justification and the legal protection of private initiative will not be subsequently withdrawn. This is all the more important since the "fundamental laws" with which Gorbachev expects to revive the Soviet economy do not allow the private ownership of the means of production.

This guarantee can be provided only by dismantling the one party system. It is unclear why citizens should risk their own possessions, their work or their very social identity in a context characterized by the presence of a government which, limited neither by constitutional constraints nor by a balance of powers, can disallow from one day to the next what it previously allowed. The whole history of Soviet communism shows that it is foolish to trust the declarations of purpose of a party which, seeing the market as a perverse institution degrading human nature and transforming society into a "*desert inhabited by wild animals*,"[7] has never hesitated to sacrifice efficiency on the altar of ideological imperatives. In 1917 Lenin took power with the slogan, "Land to the Peasants"; in 1918, in accordance with the spirit and the letter of scientific socialism, he decided to abolish all private property and, finally, in 1921, in order to reverse the frightening collapse of production, he saw fit to give land to the peasants.[8] With such a record, and

6. Oskar Lange, *Economia Politica*, Vol. I (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1974), p. 169.
7. Karl Marx, "Peuchet: On Suicide," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), Vol. 4, p. 604.
8. Cf. Yevghenij Ambartsumov, *NEP: A Modern View* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1988).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

keeping in mind that since the end of 1929 the Soviet Communist Party declared war against the kulaks, it is not surprising that people in the USSR today are suspicious when the same party claims that salvation is to be found in a return to the market, but which tomorrow may well reverse its policies and sing once again the song of the superiority (technical rather than moral) of central planning.[9]

Thus Gorbachev has become aware of the fact that economic development and the marketization of production and distribution are the same thing, and that marketization requires specific juridical guarantees. But he does not seem to be aware of the fact that the relaunching of economic development requires particular political preconditions.

The preconditions of economic development can refer to two very different things. Economic development means either the absolute growth of an economy's goods and services, or an increase of *per capita* production. It is usually thought that these two things are inextricably connected and that economic development began with the industrial revolution. Such, however, is not the case. Within pre-capitalist societies the growth of total production was not in proportion to a growth in productivity but, as a rule, only to demographic growth. Moreover, it is not true that economic development as it increases production *per capita* came about only with the industrial revolution. On the contrary, it is closer to the truth to say that the development of productivity made possible the industrial revolution. The latter was "the culminating phase of a not too spectacular process, the consequence of a long period of development."[10] Industrialization could not have taken place without the agricultural revolution and without the commercial revolution whereby, beginning with the Lower Middle Ages, a division of labor mediated by the market became consolidated and made possible a constant increase in *per capita* production. This is why for years, in referring to the economic situation of Europe during the Lower Middle Ages, historians have talked about "industrialization before industrialization"[11] or "capitalist market economy without factories."[12]

A third misconception is that a heavy accumulation of capital is indispensable for the take off of economic development. In order to have this

9. Such a party could recycle Khrushchev's strategy of allowing peasants the right to part of the product of their labor, but subsequently imposing taxes so heavy as to sabotage the whole plan.

10. R. M. Hartwell, *La Rivoluzione Industriale* (Bari: Laterza, 1973), p. 124.

11. Peter Kriedte, Hans Medick and Jürgen Schlumbhom, *L'Industrializzazaione Prima dell'Industrializzazione* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1984).

12. Alan Macfarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), p. 196.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

come about, capitalism did not need any external catalyst. It was a *spontaneous phenomenon*: "It was not constructed. Rather, it constructed itself,"[13] slowly, *step by step*, beginning when thousands of economic operators had the opportunity to invest their resources (capital, technical ability, talent, etc.) in the freest possible way and unhindered by state power. Not by accident, today historians incresingly claim that "originally fixed capital was less important than circulating capital and that economic development was partly encouraged not so much as a consequence of an increase in the rate of investments but as a result of its being channelled into modern forms of accumulation."[14] What is decisive in each case of economic development is the rational employment of wealth and the growth of productivity. This is why Fourastie argues that "the new element which has generated contemporary civilization is not capital but technical progress which paved the way for capital investments in the production of consumer goods."[15] After all, capitalism as accumulated or accumulable wealth has existed for millennia. Economic development, however, has existed only for a few centuries and, as such, cannot be explained by means of the accumulation of capital.

Of all misconceptions, the most serious is that generated by the Marxist theory of original accumulation, whereby the birth of capitalism was made possible by the expropriation of direct producers and the concentration of the means of production in the hands of a restricted number of entrepreneurs. In reality, things happened somewhat differently. Particularly relevant concentration of the means of production do not entail any economic development, neither in terms of rising total production nor in terms of increases of *per capita* production. On the contrary, all societies characterized by a polarization of wealth have been economically and technologically static societies in which the market and the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie have had only a marginal role.

One example will suffice to illustrate how the transformation of a static economy into a self-propelling one is tied to productivity and that the latter is closely tied to a precise political-juridical framework. The Dutch in the 17th century "produced almost nothing; and (with the possible exception of dairy products) the little they produced was inadequate to meet, in whatever field, the needs of an overabundant

13. Nikolai Bukharin, *Economia del Periodo di Trasformazione* (Milano: Jaca Book, 1971), p. 68.

14. S. B. Saul, "Industrializzazione: il Caso Inglese", in *La Rivoluzione Industriale fra il Settecento e l'Ottencento* (Milan: Mondadori, 1984), p. 34.

15. Jean Fourastie, *Le Grand Espoir du XX Siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), p. 32.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

population. It was necessary to import grain, barley, coal, not to mention all pre-industrial raw materials, from leather to metals, to wool, to wood for naval construction, and dyes."[16] Despite all this, during that period the Dutch economy became the most opulent, dynamic, and creative in the world. For over a century it was the acme of capitalist development and the prototype of a society under the hegemony of an extraordinary entrepreneurial class. There is no trace of any Marxian original accumulation or any other type of external catalytic factor. Nor is it possible to find recourse to the famous but unfortunate Weberian thesis concerning the neo-Calvinist ethic as the variable able to explain such an economic "miracle," since the reformed Church itself was the main obstacle confronting entrepreneurs. It "constantly stood in opposition to capitalist principles of societal organization,"[17] yet it did not succeed in suffocating the acquisitive spirit since it operated within a highly decentralized political system where every city acted as a state within a state. Furthermore, orthodox Calvinists constituted only a minority,[18] whose intolerance was checkmated by all — Lutherans, Catholics, Jews, etc. — who were afraid of a confessional state.

As a result, Holland became a tolerant country and, for this reason, the "land of refuge" of intellectuals and entrepreneurs who were forced to leave their country by the Counter-Reformation. The Union of the Seven Republics "owed all its prosperity"[19] to these exiles. This was made possible only by the system of political-juridical guarantees it offered them, which defended not only religious liberty but also free private enterprise. The latter was practically unlimited. The Dutch Republic was what Gustav Renier called a "community of merchants," which considered private economic interests sacred and untouchable, and which practiced the purest *laissez-faire*. In short, the extraordinary Dutch economic development was a child of a political-juridical framework within which entrepreneurs were able to operate — a framework

16. Paul Zumthor, *La Vie Quotidienne en Hollande au Temps de Rembrandt* (Paris: Hachette, 1990), p. 303.

17. Olivier C. Cox, *The Foundations of Capitalism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 223.

18. It should be recalled that "today it is believed that around 1650 almost half the population was Catholic." See O. G. Haitsma Mulier, "La Società delle Sette Province Unite nel Seicento" in Nicola Tranfaglia and Massimo Firpo, eds., *La Storia*, Vol. V (Turin: UTET, 1986), p. 409. In addition, it was regarded by the *Landsaavocaat* John van Oldenbarneveldt as "la plus saine et plus rich patrie." Cited by Alastair Duke, "The Ambivalent Faces of Calvinism in the Netherlands," in Menna Prestwich, ed., *International Calvinism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 109.

19. Charles Wilson, *La Repubblica Olandese* (Milan: Il Saggiatore,1968), p. 52.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which protected in a most complete fashion private property and profits, and offered economic actors the broadest liberty to buy and sell.

This kind of protection and liberty were almost completely absent from the countries under Spanish domination. Since Phillip II and his successors decided to eradicate heresy at all costs, entrepreneurs ended up living within a terroristic regime. Their possessions and their life was in the hands of political and ecclesiastical authorities. An anonymous accusation was sufficient for the tribunal of the Inquisition to arrest the accused and expropriate all his possessions. What followed was a long, interminable trial which usually resulted in the death penalty, whose function was not, as pointed out in Francesco Pena's *Inquisitor's Manual*, "to save the soul of the offender but, rather, to acquire public property and terrorize the people."[20]

The inevitable consequence of such a practice was the exodus of intellect and capital towards countries such as Switzerland, England and, above all, Holland, where there was practically no religious intolerance and where private property was guaranteed. As a result, two Europes evolved: one, under a regime of terror of the Counter-Reformation, economically depressed; the other, where a plurality of religious sects ruled out the rise of an inquisitorial state, dynamic and creative. In this second, dynamic Europe the economy was granted broad freedoms and the rights of subjects were spelled out, so as to render them citizens enfranchised with fixed rights recognized by the state. Among these, the right to own property had a decisive role. As Montesquieu readily observed,[21] they made possible the progressive marketization of production and distribution and, therefore, a more rational employment of resources. This brought about "the Europe of bourgeois freedom" which, precisely because it was based on the institutionalization of the rights of propertied citizens and on the protection of private enterprise, became the "developing Europe."

To unveil the mystery of economic development, which is also the

20. Cited by Bartolome Benassar, "L'Inquisizione o la Pedagogia della Paura" in *Storia dell'Inquisizione Spagnola dal XV al XIX secolo* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1980), p. 95.

21. "In short, an opinion of greater certainty, as to the possession of property in these states, makes them undertake everything. They flatter themselves with the hopes of receiving great advantages from the smiles of fortune; and thinking themselves sure of what they have already acquired, they boldly expose it in order to acquire more; risking nothing, but as the means of obtaining . . . . A general rule: a nation in slavery labors more to preserve than to acquire; a free nation, more to acquire than to preserve." (Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. by Thomas Nugent (New York: Haffner Press, 1949). p. 319.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mystery of the birth of capitalism, it is necessary to forget about both the Marxian theory of original accumulation and the Weberian theory of the Protestant Ethic as theories unable to explain the transition from a static to a dynamic economy.[22] It is also necessary to modify Fourastie's thesis. Clearly, technological progress had a fundamental role in the historical process which led Europe to invent economic development. But technological progress was preceded by a significant increase in agricultural productivity — an increase which today historians explain in terms of the introduction of important innovations in the juridical structure of land ownership which led to a "partial social and economic emancipation of the peasants."[23] Only with the formation of a large class of direct producers were the cultivated lands best exploited. This supports Lapage's thesis to the effect that "the agricultural revolution was not so much a technological phenomenon, but the consequence of the evolution of property rights."[24]

But property rights, in turn, depend on the structure of power. A despotic power is such precisely to the extent that it does not recognize its subjects' inviolable rights. It considers its jurisdictional power unlimited and discretionary. It can do all because, in a sense, it is master of all. There are no countervailing powers which can stop it, and this leads it to trample economic laws. To recall one of Montesquieu's more effective images, when the despot wants fruit, he cuts the tree at the roots.[25] He does not bother with costs since he is not concerned with efficiency. He wastes resources and does not utilize capital rationally. This leaves no capital in the hands of his subjects, who are continuously expropriated by means of such high taxes that their entrapreneurial spirit suffocates. This is why despotism is an inherently anti-economic political system,[26]

---

22. Cf. Luciano Pellicani, *Saggio sulla Genesi del Capitalism* (Milan: SugarCo., 1988).

23. Guy Fourquin, *Storia Economica dell"Occidente Medievale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1987), p. 246.

24. Henri Lepage, *Domani il Capialismo* (Rome: Edizioni L'Opinione,1978), p.80.

25. "When the savages of Louisiana are desirous of fruit, they cut the tree to the root, and gather the fruit. This is an emblem of depotic government." (Montesquieu, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 57.

26. This can be readily seen in the famous *Shang-Shun-Shu* which outlines the following directives: "Do not agree to buy grain from the merchants nor sell grain to the peasants"; place on wine and meat "taxes so heavy that they amount to ten times the cost of production" so that "there are few merchants and traders"; "do not allow people to change residence without authorization" so that they "do not have any opportunity to hear about changes or to see different places"; "exact heavy customs duties" so that "the peasants hate merchants and merchants become confused and discouraged"; act in such a way that "profits can leave the country only by means of one channel." *Il Libro del Signore di Shang* (Milan: Adelphi, 1989), pp. 153-154 and p. 253. This

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

while its opposite, a state based on rights, is an inherently capitalist political system.

The very concept of capitalism entails a plurality of competing economic subjects operating on the assumption that the profits of their activity will not be cut down by arbitrary state intervention. It also entails the possibility to buy and sell anywhere everything they think necessary for business — including the labor-power of formally free proletarians. These necessary conditions for bourgeois entrepreneurship can be fully guaranteed only by a state based on rights.[27] Such a state can come about by means of the progressive institutionalization of the "separation of property from sovereignty, of private from collective wealth,"[28] whereby individuals have access to contractual freedom and market resources — capital, technical competence, labor-power, etc. The fundamental juridical institution of capitalist society is the contract. It is so fundamental that this society can be defined a "contractual society" in which "the civil code juridically guarantees individual freedoms *vis à vis* the state, the autonomous use of one's property and does not interfere in relations among individuals, intervening only if one of the other parties requests the state's assistance against the other in case of a failure to respect agreements."[29]

Thus the state based on rights and capitalism appear on the world

---

is the theoretical elaboration of the task of the state as that of blocking economic development by opposing free enterprise and closely controlling the mercantile class in order to prevent them from becoming an autonomous social force able to fuel social dynamics. This model became reality with Shih Hunag-ti's foundation of the Celestial Empire, with the result that China was systematically prevented from becoming a developing economy.

27. This does not mean that authoritarian states are necessarily incompatible with development. It only means that the latter is possible only if, in the economic sphere, the government follows the principles of a state based on rights. Even Nazism, in order not to suffocate the development of the forces of production, adopted the formula of the "dual state" — a peculiar combination of the total absence of juridical guarantees in all of society, except in the economic sphere. Cf. Ernst Frankael, *The Dual State*, trans. E.A. Shils, E. Lawenstein and K. Norr (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941). It is also to be remembered that, as a rule, countries with authoritarian regimes live parasitically, exploiting the know-how generated by countries with liberal regimes. Only the latter is able to maximize creativity within society to the extent that it guarantees private property, profits and free enterprise. It does so, however, at the expense of social justice, since it does not pay much attention to the rights of those unable to play this capitalist game. In other words, in its "pure" form — as, e.g., elaborated by Hayek — it recognizes only one value, instrumental rationality, to which it sacrifices all else.

28. John R. Commons, *I Fondamenti Giuridici del Capitalismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1981), p. 408.

29. Mario G. Losano, *Grandi Sistemi Giuridici* (Turin: Einaudi, 1978), p. 36.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scene as two closely tied phenomena. In order to develop as the generator of economic development, the bourgeoisie needs the institutionalization of the *certainty of rights* — especially the *certainty of the right to own property*. This is the essential prerequisite for economic expansion and thus for the creation of a market system, i.e., for that economic development which is the product of *free enterprise* and of competition. Jointly, free enterprise and economic development have generated a system based on rationalization and dominated by a new anthropological type: the fanatic who produces for the sake of production, who seems to have no other objective than the unlimited expansion of its enterprise.

In light of all this, it is not surprising that Europe gave birth to capitalism. As a spontaneous historical phenomenon which needs no external stimulus for coming into being other than the preconditions for its birth and development — the political-juridical protection of the right to property and the freedom to buy and sell, i.e., a distinction between the political and the economic sphere so that the latter can be self-regulating — capitalism is a system of "freed economy," able to develop according to its internal logic. This can happen only if there is a juridically guaranteed and politically protected space within which social actors can participate in free exchange without fear of arbitrary and oppressive interference. All other factors, important as they may be, are secondary or, more precisely, become meaningful only if private property and free enterprise are guaranteed. This is why Oriental society, with the exception of Japan, where the *chonin* enjoyed a freedom of trade very similar to that enjoyed by European merchants,[30] did not invent and institutionalize economic development. Closed within the Weberian "iron cage," the Oriental bourgeoisie had to operate within a regime of uncertainty, constantly under the threat of a bureaucracy ready to sacrifice economic rationality on the alter of political rationality in order to keep its subjects under control. Thus, as Wilford Read put it, the secret of the history of Oriental society is that "property is always insecure."[31] This insecurity has been the main cause of its static character, it

30. Cf. in particular, the important work of Giorgio Borsa, *La Nascita del Mondo Moderno in Asia Orientale* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1977).

31. Cited by E.L. Jones, *Il Miracolo Europeo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1984), p. 199. François Bernier has analyzed the causal connections between despotism and economic stagnation in his *Voyage dans les Etats du Grand Mogol* (Paris: Fayard 1981). As Marx put it: "Bernier rightly considers the basis of all phenomena in the East — he refers to Turkey, Persia, Hindustan — to be the *absence of private property in land*. This is the real key, even to the Oriental heaven. . . ." See Marx' letter to Engels (London, June 2, 1853), under the title "[Oriental Cities]," in Marx and Engels, *Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*, ed. by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has prevented the birth of the Schumpeterian entrepreneur who, protected by law, explored the "world of the possible" and, with his daring innovations, fueled that process of "creative destruction" which is economic development.

In Western Europe "feudal anarchy" made possible the institutionalization of the "dialectic between state and society," i.e., the formation of a system of countervailing powers (the nobility, the autonomous cities, the Church, etc.) and therefore the creation of a social space reserved for free production and exchange, where entrepreneurs could experiment in relative freedom with those technologies and forms of exchange and production which precipitated the shift from an economy based on merely satisfying existing needs to one based on unlimited acquisition. This is why the modern market economy is a by-product of a "society based on rights," born through "the obstinate development of particular freedoms as privileges reserved to certain groups."[32] Capitalism did not create the society based on rights but, on the contrary, it was the latter which took form through an interminable sequence of harsh class conflict beginning in the 11th century when, taking advantage of the frontal collision between the Papacy and the Empire, the burghers introduced popular government in the cities thus precipitating the communal revolution. This made capitalism possible, even if capitalism, in turn, by contributing to the growth of resources and of life-chances, reinforced the society based on rights. Juridical guarantees made it possible for the European bourgeoisie to explore, like no other historical subject, the possibilities of a market economy.[33] Thus Western Europe and its cultural appendices (the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa), by institutionalizing the rights to own property, created the "economic society": "a world reduced to a single, gigantic market"[34] characterized by the hegemony of the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, by the dominion of economic rationality and by the obsessive pursuit of the unlimited growth of the forces of production.

Lewis S. Feuer (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., 1959), p. 456 Notwithstanding all this, Marx did not alter his attitude towards private property: he continued to see it as the *source* of irrationality and exploitation, while seeing state ownership as the solution.

32. Fernand Braudel, *Grammaire des Civilizations* (Parigi: Arthaud- Flammarion, 1987), p. 341.

33. Such an opportunity was guaranteed even by the absolute state on the basis of Bossuet's principle, according to which "private property is legitimate and inviolable." Cited by Richard Bonney, *L'Absolutisme* (Paris: PUF, 1989), p. 66.

34. Oliver E. Williamson, *Le Istituzioni Economiche del Capitalismo* (Milan: Angeli, 1987), p. 126.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thus the development of the forces of production presupposes that the state was so structured as to allow economic self-regulation, i.e., an economy functioning according to the laws of the market. Innovation is tied to the existence of a multiplicity of social actors sufficiently motivated to explore the "field of the possible," to exploit opportunities, to transform everything into a source of profit. In this sense, the market is not just a "procedure of discovery,"[35] but also a procedure of experimentation: an ideal place where ideas are examined by submitting them to the tribunal of rationality — the only tribunal qualified to judge their economic viability.

What is lacking in the Soviet Union is precisely this impersonal and spontaneous procedure of discovery and experimentation. The fact that it is afflicted by what Gorbachev calls the "process of stagnation"[36] corroborates the previous argument, i.e., that when the market is suppressed, the economy as a rational employer of scarce resources leaves the scene and society is automatically deprived of what generates development. For decades, the Soviet ruling class was convinced that a planned economy was more rational and that, in the long run, it would win out against the market economy by becoming generalized worldwide. Such a conviction was refuted daily by the concrete *modus operandi* of the central plan which, in reality, did not plan anything, since all its objectives, with the exception of military ones, were never "centralized."[37] But Marxism-Leninism, that gigantic ideological censorship forced by the Soviet Communist Party on society and on itself, by demonizing all economic categories (from private property to profit, from competition to the contract), has hindered an accurate reading of events. The result has been the most extraordinary paradox of history, i.e., that while the Soviet Communist Party "scientifically" destroyed conditions for development, it was convinced it was following the only truly scientific economic theory.

Then, suddenly, there was a reawakening. Bombarded by what Hegel called "the hard answers of history," the *nomenklatura* realized that, far from accelerating development, the plan was a brake on it[38] and that the entire Soviet system is vitiated by a birth defect:

35. Friedrich A. von Hayek, *Conoscenza, Mercato, Pianificazione* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1988), p. 315.

36. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika* (Milan: Mondadori, 1987), p. 87.

37. Nikolai Fedorenko has pointed out the senselessness of a command economy by calculating that, because of the volume of the calculations which *Gosplan* must make, it takes 29,999 years to come up with the production plan for one year.

38. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestrojka*, *op. cit.*, p. 55

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

communism[39] or, which is the same thing, statism.[40] To construct communism means "to substitute trade with the distribution of various products planned and organized at the state level,"[41] so that "the entire society becomes a huge office and a huge factory."[42] This means that the proletariat must "centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state"[43] in order to bring about the "destruction of the market economy."[44] But the destruction of the market economy is the destruction of the economy as such. It also entails the destruction of social spontaneity and its replacement by state monopoly in all areas, thus rendering the bureaucracy omnipotent and society sterile. Marx' "expropriation of the expropriators" carried out by the October Revolution has had, as its inevitable consequence, the expropriation of civil society. Deprived of economic resources, this society became state-dependent: it ceased to be a relatively autonomous reality and became an appendage of the state. Worse yet, it was completely taken over by the state in that, as Bukharin proudly emphasized in relation to the 1936 Constitution, the organizations of society have been transformed into "peripheral organs of the state"[45] — means to realize the mandates of the bureaucratic-managerial apparatus and of its *spiritus rector*: the Communist Party. In a nutshell, to the extent that it pursued its objectives to eliminate every trace of the market and of social spontaneity,

---

39. In a 1987 article in *Novy Mir*, Nikolai Schemlev wrote that "the cause of our difficulties is not due solely to military spending or to the expansive global responsibilies taken on by the USSR. . . . The persistent efforts to violate the objective laws of economic life and to do away with the natural incentives to work have led to results diametriacally opposite to those projected. Now we have an unbalanced economy plagued by scarcity, an economy which rejects scientific and technological progress and, to be completely honest, an unplannable economy." Cited by Alec Nove, "Los Problemas economicos de la *Perestrojka*," in *Debates*, No. 3 (1990), p. 68.

40. As Aleksander Cipko has written: "We have finally dared to undertake a frank discussion concerning the original sources, we have decided to do what we did not do 70 years ago: question the ideals and the motives of the October Revolution. Many have pointed out that the messianism and the internationalism of the October Revolution have turned out to be catastrophic for Russian civilization as it has been constituted over the centuries. We have seen that Lenin launched the October Revolution on the basis of a utopia, we have seen that in order to avoid Stalinism we would have had to reject the basic truths of Marxism." See his "Dalla Nostra Esperienze di Costruttori del'Impossibile," in *Mondoperaio*, No. 6 (1990), p. 59.

41. Lenin, *Progetto di Programma del PCR (B)*, in *Opere Complete*, *op. cit.*, Vol. XXIX, p. 120.

42. Lenin, "Stato e rivoluzione," in *Opere Complete*, *op. cit.*, vol. XXV, p. 445.

43. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in *Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

44. Lenin, "La Questione Agraria in Russia," in *Opere Complete*, *op. cit.* Vol. XV, p. 130.

45. Nikolai Bukharin, *Le Vie della Rivoluzione* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1980), p. 253.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the October Revolution generated an inherently irrational method of production where economic laws were prevented from functioning and were substituted by the various inevitably arbitrary decrees of the bureaucratic-managerial apparatus. The economy literally disappeared, strangled by politics and ideology.[46]

Independent of its original intentions, the Bolshevik Revolution amounted to an "Asiatic reaction" against the Westernization undertaken by the Czar. It restored and perfected the "iron cage" within which it had imprisoned society. In so doing, however, not only did it eradicate every kind of liberty, but it also eradicated creativity in all fields. The scientific, technological, and marketing sterility afflicting the Soviet Union is the inexorable consequence of the state control of the means of production. It follows from all this that there is only one way to reverse this process: dismantle statism in the Soviet Union and return to society that autonomy which was taken away when the Bolshevik Party, faithful to Marxism, began to destroy the market economy. The development of the forces of production in the Soviet Union requires the restoration of so-called "bourgeois freedoms." *If one wants to free the economy, one must first free society*. This is possible only by granting subjects citizenship rights, such as the right to own property and the right to buy and sell freely, which are the minimal conditions necessary for an innovative economy. To get out of the slough of stagnation, the Soviet Union must dismantle the communist regime, from the Party to the plan, from the monopoly of the means of communication to the monopoly of the means of production. It must structure the state in such a way that "bourgeois rights" are operative within production and exchange.

This means the end of the most exciting myth of our times: the myth

46. Actually, the economy in the Soviet Union has never entirely disappeared since, from the very beginning, within the system's folds, there has been the black market, demonized by the obligatory state ideology but tolerated by the authorities. See Ernest Mandel, *Trattato di Economia Marxista* (Rome: Savelli, 1974). This corroborates the thesis whereby the market is a natural and spontaneous mechanism, which no complex society can do without. Most of the tragedies generated by triumphant communist revolutions were the result of the "crazy" idea that it is both possible and desirable to solve the economic problems without a market — an idea which has led communist regimes to destroy, while proclaiming as their objective the unlimited growth of the forces of production, all the institutions and principles without which development is inconceivable. Since this policy is in open conflict with the spontaneous tendency of society, it has led communist regimes to institutionalize what Djilas has called "a form of latent civil war between the government and the people." See Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957), p. 87.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of communism as "the *ultimate* form of social organization of the human family"[47] as the solution of "the riddle of history."[48] But it also means that Marx was right when he claimed that, in order to break the vicious circle of misery, all backward societies must pass through the experience of capitalism. To have ignored this point has probably resulted in the biggest catastrophe ever to happen to the Russian people and to all others who, willingly or not, followed the example.

All of this seems to offer the USSR a way out of the *impasse* in which the Communist Party has plunged it. By rejecting the pretense of constructing the impossible, i.e., "an economy without an economy," the Soviets can stop the degradation of their way of life and become reconnected, even if after a long and difficult path, with advanced industrial countries from which they have become estranged by the October Revolution. Unfortunately, the re-marketization of the Russian economy constitutes such a massive and contradictory restructuring as to warrant pessimism. Even if the *nomenklatura* were able to provide a correct diagnosis of the disease which is eroding the vital fabric of Soviet society, and thus move towards a market economy and an autonomous society, what *chances* does it have of carrying out such a counter-revolution without resulting in the system's disintegration? A market economy does not mean only the development of the forces of production, technological progress, and the constant improvement of life-chances. It also means unemployment, inflation, uneven distribution of wealth and the unleashing of possessive individualism. All of these may render Soviet society ungovernable or even precipitate into a civil war. In this, the "sick man" of the 20th century, the Soviet Empire, finds itself in a condition similar to that "sick man of Europe" in the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire. It can be cured only by means of a highly risky shock therapy.

47. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Associazione Mondiale del Comunisti Rivoluzionari, in *Opere Complete*, *op. cit.* ol. X, p. 617.

48. Karl Marx, "Private Property and Communism," in Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, ed. with an Introduction by Dirk J. Struik, trans. by Martin Milligan (New York: International Publishers, 1964), p. 135.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Economic Reform and the Soviet National Question

Joseph C. Brandt

Gorbachev's attempt to simultaneously reform the economy, the polity and society has sparked a heated debate within the Soviet Union between Moscow and the republics and between the republics themselves about the country's future economic arrangements. Whereas such issues are contentious enough in territorially homogeneous countries such as the US, if one throws in a volatile mixture of ethnicity and officially sanctioned homelands, the banalities of tax and finance become the stuff of virulent nationalist sloganeering.

To date, the controversy has focused on "republican *khozraschet*," a term ambiguous enough to legitimate a myriad of interpretations. There is nothing exceptional about the Soviet notion of *khozraschet*. A mainstay of Bolshevik central planning jargon since the early years of the Soviet state, *khozraschet* is best translated as "economic accountability." Since Stalin's death, it has reappeared in economic reform documents as an exhortation for enterprise managers to keep costs in line. Calls for *khozraschet* have emerged during Gorbachev's tenure as a cornerstone of his economic reforms. Also implicit in the term is a vague notion of sovereignty, since an enterprise operating in accordance with *khozraschet* should rely upon its own resources for operating expenses rather than expect a year-end infusion of ministerial rubles. It is this idea of sovereignty that is implied by the novel phrase "republican *khozraschet*," a term which entered the Soviet vernacular during the summer of 1988 courtesy of Baltic agitation for political and economic reform. Since then, discussions about the economic basis of the Soviet federation have centered

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

around the practical implication of the term for the republics' economies and, more generally, center-periphery economic relations.[1]

In many ways, it would seem that discussions in the Soviet Union about economic sovereignty have become an anachronism at a time when Gorbachev and his advisors call for the transfer of the Soviet economy onto a market footing. As reform economists such as Stanislav Shatalin have pointed out, the notion of economic "control," be it by the republic or center, is at odds with market reform. As he remarked in a recent interview: "It's said that the economy will be subordinated to the regional leadership. To what is General Electric subordinated? The Texas *raispolkom* (local party committee)? The economy should be subordinated only to the market and the laws of the state . . . ."[2]

However, as the recent postponement of the transition to the market highlights, rhetoric and reality are often at odds in Soviet economic reform. Even if market reform were enacted tomorrow, it would be at least a decade before the preponderance of the country's economic activity lay outside the planning sphere. Now that political struggle is a legitimate facet of Soviet life, the republics have been actively trying to influence the outcome of nationwide discussions about the future economic system. Economic sovereignty serves as both a vaguely delineated concept that republic officials can define in accordance with their territory's economic interests and a trendy idea which is perceived by the citizenry as an important aspect of nationalist reaffirmation. This latter point is crucial. With the democratization of the political system over the past two years, leaders of the fifteen republics must look down to the electorate not up to Moscow in order to secure and maintain their positions. For many local Party officials, a firm embrace of economic sovereignty was a prerequisite to success in elections in the spring and fall of 1989-90.

Defining Republican Economic Sovereignty

The ascription of meaning is a tricky thing. Nowhere is this more evident than in the consideration of economic sovereignty. A cogent definition of the term's meaning does not exist apart from the interests of central authorities, republican party officials, regional blocs and popular forces. There is not one but many definitions of republican economic sovereignty, and an understanding of the importance of this issue must begin with the actors own perceptions.

---

1. For a discussion of the problems with a new Soviet Federation, see Philip Goldman, "*Perestroika*: End or Beginning of Soviet Federalism?," in this issue of *Telos*.
2. "Est'li vykhod iz krizisa?," *Argumenty i Fakty*, No. 13 (1990), p. 1.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For Moscow, republican economic sovereignty implies the transfer of economic management along with some authority and administrative responsibility away from the central planning ministries and administrative agencies to similar agencies at the republican level.[3] Republics are now entrusted with making decisions about their territory's economy. This includes planning decisions formerly made in Moscow as well as providing and paying for accompanying services. This last component is referred to as *samofinansirovanie* or "self-financing." In theory, republican authorities are already partners in the management of their economies. In practice, however, the center has held on to much of the responsibility and all of the authority for the republics' economies. Ironically, such an extreme degree of centralization is the result of a reaction to similar decentralization policies launched by Khrushchev in the 1960s: the *sovnarkhoz* reform. This was a plan to turn economic decision-making over to eight regional councils. It resulted in unforseen complications, particularly with inter-regional supply. The plan's current supporters fear similar results with the new proposals.

Gorbachev originally broached the idea of economic decentralization during the June 1987 Plenum of the Communist Party's Central Committee where he unveiled his plans for *perestroika*, including its bulwark, the State Law on the Enterprise.[4] Section four of this law called for the enhancement of the territorial distribution of planning, an increase of the responsibilities of the republican Council of Ministers for satisfying consumer and social needs, and the concentration of local economic management issues in the hands of republican and local authorities.[5] These themes were raised again the following year at the XIX Party Congress, shortly after which a commission drafted a document dealing with similar issues.[6] It was released for nation-wide discussion in March 1989.[7]

---

3. Vladimir Semenov, Yuri Karchakov, "Teoreticheskie i prakticheskie voprosy regional'novo khozrascheta," *Ekonomicheskie Nauki*, No. 5 (1989), pp. 34-42; Nazim Imanov, "Regional'noe samofinansirovanie," *Ekonomicheskie Nauki*, No. 9 (1989), pp. 57-64.

4. Called the Basic Provisions (*Osnovy Polozhenii*) of the reform, these documents are the legislative embodiment of Gorbachev's ideas for economic reform. See "Osnovy Polozhenii . . ." in *Pravda* (June 27, 1987).

5. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

6. "Obshchiy printsipy perestroiki rukovodstva ekonomikoi i sotsial'nboi sferoi v soyuznykh respublikakh na osnove rasshireniya ikh suverennykh prav, samoupravleniya i samofinansirovaniy," *Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta*, No. 12 (1989), pp. 10-13; hereinafter referred to simply as the *General Principles*.

7. Pavel Antropov, "Na puti k garmonii," *Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta*, No. 11 (1989), pp. 9-10.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By early 1987, Gorbachev realized that his plans to reinvigorate the Soviet economy would not work as originally envisioned in 1985-86 since they were formulated in terms of the traditional method of making mammoth capital investments in heavy industry. What was really needed was to rationalize the country's hyper-centralized economic decision-making and allocation system. Thus he extended reforms to the polity and society. Given the Soviet federal structure, the republics were targeted as the agencies entrusted to carry out this decentralization. This is indicative of Gorbachev's "vision," at least at this date, of the ideal Soviet socio-economic system. The emphasis on republics as planning units is another instance of his dislike of the market. Had a market been the goal, economic decentralization would have been relatively irrelevant, since market economies operate oblivious to administrative boundaries.

Shifting economic accountability to the republics served another function. As with any hegemonic relation, that between Moscow and the republics entailed a modicum of self-sacrifice in exchange for the overall substantive benefits. As the burgeoning literature on the decline of American hegemony points out, however, the benefits to the hegemony are generally political and not very visible. Political will is required, since maintaining the hegemonic relation often means granting economic concessions. The Soviet multi-national empire was managed in part by subsidizing the less developed regions. In the face of a staggering budget deficit, however, Gorbachev hoped to shift the fiscal burden of social services to the republics in order to relieve the federal budget.[8] In so doing, he provoked a hostile reaction from the region (Central Asia) most loyal to the federation.

By the XIX Party Congress, Moscow was no longer primarily concerned with budget deficits, but with rising ethnic unrest. Thus there was a subtle but crucial shift in the official understanding of the role of economic sovereignty in the republics. The idea was now heralded as a means "to harmonize national relations"[9] rather than to improve the Soviet economy. By summer 1988 the intense unrest in the Baltic republics was interpreted by Moscow as rooted in economic grievances rather than primarily in the Soviet illegal annexation of the region in 1940. Shrewdly, however, the Baltic protesters accepted the official diagnosis and a still vaguely defined republican economic sovereignty as

8. See, for example, Leonid Abalkin, "Uchit'sya Zhit' po sredstvam," *Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta*, No. 15 (1989), pp. 4-5; *Pravda* (March 21, 1989), p. 4; *Izvestiya* (March 30, 1989), p. 2.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 5; "Ekonomicheskie Problemy Mezhnatsional'nikh Otnoshenikh v SSSR na Sovremennom Etape," *Voprosy Ekonomiki*, No. 3 (1989), pp. 8-28.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a response to their demands. It was this transformation of republican sovereignty from an issue of economic decentralization into one of center-periphery relations which inaugurated the fierce struggle for the meaning of the term within the Soviet polity.

Whereas Moscow lacked a clear conception of economic sovereignty at the republican level, the Baltic states, led by Estonia, were quick to fill the vacuum and propose a definition not just for their own republic but the entire Union. Following the XIX Party Conference, Baltic activists pressured the center to allow Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to draft legislation and thus formalized increased economic control by the republics. Rather than permit such a unilateral step, Moscow decided to form a commission headed by *Gosplan* chief Yuri Maslyukov to draft legislation for the entire Union and, in an unprecedented action, invited experts and leaders from the republics to participate.[10] Though the commission succeeded in producing a legislative document, the compromise seeking to satisfy competing republican interests was unsatisfactory and the *General Principles* remains unratified by the Soviet legislature. The issue has thus been shifted to republican parliaments now allowed to draft their own legislation.

The irony of this debate is that, while republican economic sovereignty was envisioned by Moscow as a response to the republics' dissatisfaction within the Union and as an important component of a new transnational federation, it actually *encouraged* a nationalist response from republic leaders. Thus, in a state hostile to pluralist notions of competing interests, republican officials were forced to define and advocate their own parochial concerns, i.e., to argue from a republican viewpoint. This not only encouraged center-periphery conflicts, but also conflicts between the various republics.

Central ministerial planning has had severe economic, ecological and demographic consequences in the Baltic republics. Huge development projects, whose labor requirements far exceed the Estonian and Latvian pool, necessitated an influx of workers, mostly undereducated Russians, that has tipped the demographic balance to such an extent that the future existence of both nations is now in question. The three republics have suffered immense ecological destruction. In addition, each has traditionally looked North and West, not East, when comparing their living standards. The indigenous peoples of the Baltic republics see republican accountability as salvation — ironically, the abbreviation for the Estonian

10. Antropov, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

plan is "IME," which is the Estonian word for "miracle." It fulfills three main goals: 1) the end of foreign migration into the region; 2) it begins to come to terms with ecological destruction; and, 3) most importantly, though not publicly admitted by local elites, it provides the economic basis for eventual secession and independence. Yet the Baltic republics found the compromise embodied in the *General Principles* unsatisfactory. Even before the Maslyukov Commission was established to draft new legislation, the Estonians had formulated and published their own proposal, subsequently endorsed and adopted by Latvia and Lithuania. In opposition to central planners and the Central Asian republics, the Baltic representatives submitted their own legislative version of republican accountability. It was subsequently approved by the USSR Supreme Soviet on November 24, 1989.

The Baltic version rejects the mere decentralization of economic management and substitutes the republic for Moscow as the highest authority within the republics' borders. This entails a complete break with the existing economic system. It envisions markets for land, labor and capital. Enterprises currently under Moscow's direction are to be transferred to the republic, which in turn will redistribute the assets. The economy is to be monetized, while monetary policy and the republican currency are to be controlled by the republic's central bank. Most importantly, from the Central Asian republics' perspective, the Baltic definition of republican economic sovereignty completely transforms center-periphery fiscal relations. Tax authority will rest with republican, not federal authorities, and payment to the federal treasury will be based on a fixed percentage of all tax receipts, negotiated between the republican and federal finance ministries.[11] All this sounds unbelievable, but it has recently been approved by the USSR Supreme Soviet, complete with Gorbachev's signature.

If for the Baltic republics all this is metaphorically divine, for the Central Asian republics and Kazakhstan it is satanic. Each of the republics welcomes the opportunity to influence central investment and planning decisions as a means to control their ecological damage and diversify their single commodity economies, but their most pressing problems, demographic and fiscal, leads them to cry out for *more* central involvement in their affairs. The Central Asian predicament is practically unsolvable.[12] The economies of the region are heavily dependent on raw

11. Estonia is the first of the Baltic states to have its proposal approved; it calls for the republic to retain 80% of its tax receipts.

12. The problems of the region have received unprecedented attention in the central

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

materials. With the highest fertility rates in the Union, however, the absence of affiliated industry results in chronic unemployment problems and abject poverty.[13]

Central Asians feel doubly cursed.[14] Subsidies from the federal budget are an absolute necessity, and recently they have increased substantially (Table 1). Still, the regional national income has declined from 85% of the federal average in 1970 to 62%. Thus the Central Asian and Kazakh

Table 1

All-Union subsidies (in thousands of rubles)

	1989	1990
Uzbekistan	1,960,997	3,122,166
Kazakhstan	2,698,269	3,792,828
Kirghizia	510,857	555,453
Tadzhikhistan	321,381	405,784
Turkmenia	403,328	705,101

From *Izvestiya*, October 17, 1989.

leaderships take a dim view of republican accountability either as defined in the Baltic legislation or in the *General Principles*. Particularly troublesome for them is the shifting of the costs of social services to the republics.[15] The Central Asian leadership knows that without handouts from Moscow they would plunge into an irreparable crisis and, most likely, into feudal anarchy.

The problem is with the system of centrally-set prices. As Kazakh Communist Party first secretary Nazarbadayev recently pointed out, "Kazakhstan is the main base for extractive industries, and prices for raw and semi-processed materials and semi-processes ones, including agricultural produce, are the same as they were 30 years ago. Yet prices

press recently. For a particularly good discussion, see the round table discussion "Srednyaya Aziya i Kazakhstan: Prioritety i Alternativy Razvitiya," *Kommunist*, No. 14 (1989), pp. 23-43.

13. In a recent interview discussing the region's problems, Uzbek Communist Party first secretary Islam Karimov estimated that 45% of Uzbekistan's population had a per capita income below the subsistence wage of 75 rubles ($12.50). See FBIS-SOV-89-207 (October 27, 1989), p. 81.

14. See the interview with Kazakh first secretary Nursultan Nazarbayev in *Sovetskaya Rossiya* (October 18, 1989), p. 1.

15. For a sense of the reaction of the Uzbek republic to the *General Principles*, see Murat Sharifkhodzhaev, "Respublikanskii Khozraschet: Neobkhodimost', Sushchnost'. Problemy," *Kommunist Uzbekistana*, No. 5 (1989), pp. 28-36.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for finished products have increased seven fold and are still rising."[16]

The Central Asian and Kazakh definition of republican economic sovereignty is thus very conservative. It supports some decentralization of economic decision making (mainly as a means to diversify away from reliance on cotton), greater attention by central planners to the ecological problems (particularly in Uzbekistan, because of the Aral Sea tragedy), and an increase in the price of raw materials and the rate of the turnover tax.

The Transcaucasian and Moldavian concepts of republican economic sovereignty, however, are closer to the Baltic definition. In all four republics, Popular Front organizations include calls for Baltic-style economic autonomy in their platforms. In Georgia, the republican Supreme Soviet has adopted amendments to the Constitution which, among other things, make the republican governmental organs the highest authorities in decisions about the disposition and management of "land, water and other natural resources, property and the means of production."[17] Georgia has frequently complained about the export of their abundant produce to other regions, which creates shortages at home. Among the population too, republican economic sovereignty has been transformed into a nationalist issue. Thus Georgian government and Party officials have attacked the center's proposals as too mild. The Popular Front in Azerbaijan has also included calls for economic autonomy in their program. Though the latter republic suffers many of the same Central Asian problems, the Azeris define republican economic sovereignty in a more liberal manner.[18] Like Azerbaijan, in Armenia the Popular Front has formulated a radical variant of republican economic sovereignty and a draft plan has recently been approved.

Moldavia stands to gain the most, even from such a conservative proposal as the *General Principles*, since the preponderance of its economy consists of light industry, agriculture and food processing. Official republican commentary on the *General Principles* has been positive, though it indicates concern about the effects of the self-financing provision given that 10% of the republic's enterprises are bankrupt.[19] Here also the

16. *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, *op. cit.*

17. As reported in *Sovset*, Vol. 4, No. 25 (1989).

18. S. K. Guseinov, "Strukturnaya perestroika promishlenosti soyuznikh respublikh v usloviyakh regional'novov khozrascheta," *Vsesoyuznaya Konferentsiya "Problemy Upravleniya Narodnym Khozyaistvom Soyuznikh Respublikh" I: Problemy Respublikanskovo Khozyaistvennogo Rascheta* (Moscow: Tsentral'nyi economiko-matematichesiy Institut AN SSSR, 1989), pp. 82-86.

19. Valerii Kutyrkin, "Moldaviya na puti k samovipravleniyu i samofinansirovaniyu," *Kommunist Moldavii*, No. 7 (1989), pp. 7-14.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Moldavian Popular Front's call for complete economic autonomy has found strong support among the indigenous population radicalized by recent violence in Kishenev between themselves and Russians.

The situation in the Slavic republics has been transformed dramatically in just the past three months, illustrating the effects both of the democratization of the political system occurring today in the Soviet Union as well as the increasing trend towards radicalism within the fifteen republics. In Byelorussia, where in October 1988 the republic's Supreme Soviet adopted a very timid version of economic sovereignty, the elections in March 1990 have resulted in a far more radical legislative body calling for broad powers over the republic's economy. In like manner, events have changed strikingly in the Russian republic, where the election of Boris Yeltsin and a new parliament produced a law which places much of the management of the economy under republican jurisdiction. In the Ukraine, pressure for similar legislation emanates from *Rukh*, the republican popular front organization, which has drafted a sweeping document to "nationalize" republican economic assets and activity.

"All Power to . . . the Republics!"

Although economists such as Shatalin bemoan the proliferation of economically illogical legislation, republican economic sovereignty is now in the hands of Soviet politicians, both federal and national. The Party holds republican economic sovereignty to be crucial to "harmonize inter-ethnic relations." It is included in the Party's new nationalities platform, where it is showcased as "the economic basis for the renewal of the Soviet federation."[20] Thus the controversy surrounding the "national problem" has changed. Moscow recognizes that its nationalities policies must differentiate among regions and republics. What is good for the Baltic republics may not be so for the less developed regions of the Soviet Union. Protests in Tallinn differ in intent from protests in Tbilisi and Tashkent. While the Baltic states want independence, the Central Asian republics fear abandonment by Moscow. This shows the extent to which the Soviet "nationalities problem" is not a simple center-periphery conflict.

Discussions of economic sovereignty in the federal and republican press and, subsequently, discussions about plans for the renewal of the Soviet federation frequently employ the phrase "A Strong Center—Strong Republics." Actually this slogan implies the far different notion of

20. *Pravda* (September 24, 1989), p. 1.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"A Weaker Center — Stronger Republics," as reformists such as Abalkin have implied. For Abalkin and other economic advisers, the reasons are obvious: economic efficiency and unprecedented budget deficits demand decentralization. Politicians, including Gorbachev, see stronger republics as an answer to Moscow's ethno-political headaches. If the locus of decision-making concerning tough issues such as resource allocation and provision of services are transferred to the republics, then Moscow will cease to be the easy target of frustrated nationals.

At the same time, this approach may have backfired in this regard. The rhetorical empowerment of the republics has resulted in a wave of unilateral action which threatens to deal a death blow to the already ailing Soviet economy. By June 1990, all fifteen of the Soviet republics had adopted legislation which forbade the export of various goods produced on republican territory, particularly consumer goods. Autarchy, long a policy of the Soviet state in its dealings with the outside world, has become the policy of choice for the republics in their interaction with each other. The resultant economic deterioration should come as no surprise.

The question of a republic's economic sovereignty does not exist apart from the upheavals in Soviet society occurring today. If we take a cue from Kenneth Jowitt and look on the essence of Gorbachev's reform as "relativization" (of the Party in society and the Soviet Union in the world socialist movement) we can better understand that policies such as economic sovereignty represent Moscow's relativization *vis à vis* the republican capitals.[21] The decline of Moscow's authority in the Union has had profound effects upon Soviet society evident, as can be seen, e.g., in the spate of inter-ethnic violence.

The distinguishing feature of ethnic conflict in the Soviet Union today has *not* been the struggle between the center and the republics, but *within* the republics themselves. The failure of a transnational Soviet myth to take hold has shifted the citizenry's attention from Moscow to the republics' capitals. One's "future" as a citizen of a republic is now more than ever decided within that republic. Therefore, politics at the republican level has grown in importance. Formerly, this kind of politics had little impact on citizens' daily life since the crucial decisions were made in Moscow. Such is no longer the case.

Today the Soviet Union is witnessing the struggle to define the *republican*

21. Kenneth Jowitt, "Gorbachev: Bolshevik or Menshevik?," in Alex Pravda, Zri Gitelman and Stephen White, eds., *Developments in Soviet Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), pp. 210-231.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

national myth.[22] This has been made possible only because of the decrease in Moscow's importance in the republics. The stuff of Soviet ethnic politics is the future of minorities within republics whose majority elites are receiving more power and authority. With these new capabilities, not only can they allocate scarce resources but define the nature and future of the republican nation. This can be seen in Georgia where Ossetians and Abkhazians already confront the problem and have indicated a desire to secede from Georgia and join the Russian republic. This can also be seen in Estonia and Latvia, where Russians are embroiled in clashes with local authorities about their rights, and, of course, we have witnessed this in Azerbaijan, where Armenians in Agacno-Kharabakh struggle with the Azeri leadership in Baku. This state of affairs leads to several conclusions about the future of the Soviet multi-ethnic state. First, the Soviet future will be a multi-national one, minus some of the current members such as the Baltic states and perhaps Georgia. Second, unless the Soviet Union returns to its Stalinist past — a highly unlikely option — even for those republics which may gain independence, ethnic conflict, often violent and bloody, will continue to be the norm rather than the exception.

22. For a discussion of national myths, see Ernst B. Haas, "What is Nationalism," *International Organization*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (1986), pp. 707-745.

LABOUR/

JOURNAL OF CANADIAN LABOUR STUDIES

Labour/Le Travail is the official publication of the Committee on Canadian Labour History. Since it began publishing in 1976, it has carried many important articles in the field of working-class history, industrial sociology, labour economics, and labour relations. Although primarily interested in a historical perspective on Canadian workers, the journal is interdisciplinary in scope. In addition to articles, the journal features documents, conference reports, an annual bibliography of materials in Canadian labour studies, review essays, and reviews. While the main focus of the journal's articles is Canadian, the review essays and reviews consider international work of interest to Canadian labour studies. Many of *Labour's* articles are illustrated.

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER

While the supply lasts, new subscribers may purchase sets of the journal at a special bargain rate of $200.00 (24 issues, 7505 pp., reg. $290).

	Canada	Foreign
Individual	$15.00	$20.00 (U.S.)
Institutional	$20.00	$30.00 (U.S.)

Committee on Canadian Labour History
History Department, Memorial University
St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada, A1C 5S7

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Perestroika: *End or Beginning of Soviet Federalism?*

Philip Goldman

A critical metamorphosis is currently taking place in the Soviet Communist Party.[1] Its ideology is simultaneously being de-ritualized and de-radicalized. Speeches by Soviet leaders have become less chiliastic, as Gorbachev repeatedly calls for cadres to move resolutely "step by step" towards a new society. At the same time, some leading cadres are attempting to infuse the Party with a new social mission to implement an array of diverse transformational tasks still linked to the

1. While the Soviet political apparatus remains outwardly intact, many leading cadres see its foundations as being thoroughly eroded. Boris Oleinik, deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet Council of Nationalities, notes that "over many decades the foundations of our multi-ethnic edifice have been eroded." But today, while Party plans for a new state "edifice" foresee a very different structure, the primary function of the old "fortress" remains recognizable. Consider the "Reconstruction" (*Perestroika*) of the American South after the Civil War. Rebuilding a new American federation was only partly a matter of restoring previously existing political relations. The nature of the union was radically altered. Similarly, the Soviet Communist Party has called for rebuilding a new Soviet federation. Yet the September 1989 Platform draws largely on Leninist rather than on traditional Western constructs, because federalism is meant to enhance rather than undermine socialist political development. In the campaigns to cast Gorbachev as a liberal reformer, what is often forgotten is that Lenin is at the center of the current federal debates, not James Madison or K. C. Wheare.

In a speech with rhetorical similarities to Oleinik's,Thaddeus Stevens argued in 1865 that, "[t]he foundation of their [the South's] institutions both political, municipal, and social must be broken up and relaid, or all our blood and treasure have been spent in vain." See his speech of September 6, 1865, in Lancaster, PA, as given in Current, *Old Thad Stevens*, Vol. 2, No. 15, in Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1966), p. 144. Note Andrei Sakharov's statement that "[t]he construction of the house of state has begun from the roof, which is clearly not the best way to proceed." In *Daily Report: Supplement. Congress of People's Deputies: Stenographic Record* (June 9, 1989), p. 40.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

revolutionary period. *Perestroika*, writes Vladimir Kryuchkov, is a "revolution in the revolution."[2] References to Lenin are no longer ritualized but, on the whole, are aimed at the "deroutinization" of the Party's charisma. According to Miller, "[Gorbachev] is . . . a leading proponent of the refurbishment of theory as a beacon for the Party in its fashioning of a modernized version of socialism."[3] The rejection of Article 6, which establishes the Party's right to a monopoly on power, is a particularly important step in this direction. In its place, the Party's blueprints call for creating a unified federal polity to establish "the fundamentals of the political and economic system" in which the republics would express their sovereignty primarily through *khozraschet* (economic accountability).[4]

Defining this new socialist-federalist vision is frustrating. The Party has claimed that the Soviet Union is already a functioning federation. Yet it now advocates deploying a viable federation as a new urgent priority. Thus the draft Platform called for the *establishment* of a federation, while the final Platform called for improvements in the *existing* federation. This confusion is compounded by Lenin's changing views on the role of federalism, which makes it difficult to figure out what the present Party elite means by a "Leninist federation." Elites in the various republics and social movements also have their own interpretations, particularly evident in Russian President Boris Yeltsin's advocacy of economist Stanislav Shatalin's proposal for a 500 day transition to republican economic autonomy.[5] What this boils down to is that there is a very fluid notion of

2. "Great October and the Renewal of Soviet Society: Vladimir A. Kryuchkov's Report to the Ceremonial Session Dedicated to the 72nd Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution in the Kremlin's Palace of Congresses on 4 November 1989," *Pravda* (November 5, 1989), pp. 1-2, in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* (October 6, 1989), p. 45.

3. Robert F. Miller, "Theoretical and Ideological Issues of Reform in Socialist Systems: Some Yugoslav and Soviet Examples," *Soviet Studies* (July 1989), p. 431.

4. "Draft Nationalities Policy of the Party Under Present Conditions (CPSU Platform), adopted by the CPSU Central Committee Plenum 20 September 1989," *Pravda* (September 24, 1989), pp. 1-2, in *Daily Report: Soviet Union* (September 25, 1989), p. 101. Note also Gorbachev's statement at the Central Committee Plenum on December 25, 1989: "We are putting together a legal base under the edifice of a federation. The creation of such foundations is intended to promote that package of vitally-important draft laws which, as we calculate, will be adopted by the USSR Supreme Soviet at the beginning of next year. But in order that the building should be a solid one, it must conform to the blueprint and be built without deviating from it or from the envisaged technical norms." See "Fate of Perestroika is in Unity of the Party," Moscow Domestic Service in Russian (December 26, 1989), in *Daily Report: Soviet Union* (December 26, 1989), p. 92.

5. While it is too early to tell, it is tempting to see Gorbachev's current attempts to blend Shatalin's program with Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov's proposals for a more centralized economy as symbolic of a new ambivalence about a federal Soviet future. In essence, Gorbachev's resistance to the continued and inevitable decentralization of the Union is breaking down.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what federalism means in the Soviet Union today. In fact, it was precisely the qualification of federalism as "Leninist" that resulted in the emergence of a non-federal polity and renders it very difficult to develop a genuine federalism in present circumstances.

Leninist Federalism?

Most Western versions of federalism are concerned primarily with the allocation of authority between central and regional interests. For example, Ronald Watts argues that the fundamental feature of a federation is "that it is a political system characterized by two sub-systems, one of central government and the other of state governments, in which the component governments are co-ordinate, in the sense that neither is politically subordinate to the other, but which interact with each other at *many points both co-operatively and competitively.*"[6] But is federalism so broad as to include two political systems as different as the US and the USSR? Tejpal Singh argues that "[i]f one were to take a purely formal-legalistic approach to the question of federal state structure it would appear that there are many similarities in the Western and Soviet approaches."[7] Rudolf Schlesinger maintains that in communist states, "[f]ederalism is merely transferred from the formal constitutional organs to the party caucus, within which all important decisions are taken . . ."[8] Yet it is difficult to see how the Soviet Union is a working federation, even when one makes reference to the traditional distinctions between national-territorial and regional-administrative forms of government.

Federations establish a complex matrix of short and long-term goals and tasks consistent with maintaining unique and changing institutional relations. The commitment of regional actors to federal unity is the best measure of the extent to which obstacles to federalism are likely to be overcome. Whatever its origins, federalism generates a political culture which not only influences system-building at both the central and regional levels, but alters traditional relations between citizen, region (or nation), and country on the part of individuals, organizations, and elites. Federalism becomes a national symbol of tremendous import. It can result in cooperative relations transcending political institutions, as each member recognizes that it plays an equal role with every other unit within the polity.

---

6. Ronald L. Watts, *Administration in Federal Systems* (London: Hutchison, 1970), p. 8.
7. Tejpal Singh, *The Soviet Federal State* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1982), p. 3.
8. Rudolf Schlesinger, *Federalism in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Kegan Paul, 1945), pp. 409-410.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

While the US, Switzerland, and the USSR are all federations, they are also fundamentally different. In the US, federalism is an end in itself, representing a superior alternative to the disintegrating confederation in existence before 1787 and the national divisions that eventually led to the Civil War. Indeed, the victory of the Federalists is no less profound for the development of the US than the triumph of the Bolsheviks over their Menshevik opponents was for the Soviet Union. Federal ideology in the US allows for alterations and amendments to the political system in accordance with established rules of political conduct. It is meant to be self-perfecting, and is not to be transformed into a qualitatively different form of polity. Similarly, Switzerland determined that federalism was an attractive alternative to a confederative unity, particularly after the disruptions of the Napoleonic wars. Switzerland's federal form, however, was more influenced by a confederative past, which had lasted much longer than in America. This is evident in the supremacy of the Swiss legislature and the executive over the courts and in the rotation of the presidency in the Federal Council. In contrast, the Soviet Union's "federalism" is essentially institutional, and has traditionally been subordinated to the requirements of the class struggle. These features turned out to be the seeds of its own destruction.

Leninist federalism is unique. Although standard interpretations present Lenin as moving from opposing federalism to embracing it, his views changed over time and he never completely opposed or fully embraced the idea.[9] In 1903 Lenin called on the Armenian Social Democrats to delete the demand for a federation from their Manifesto and call for the establishment of a democratic republic.[10] Later in the same year, however, Lenin did not reject federalism outright: "We must always and unreservedly work for the *very closest* unity of the proletariat of all nationalities, and

9. Leokadiia Drobizheva claims that the most important component of Leninist thought on this question is that it called for Marxists to consider the present without hanging on to the ideas of the past, thus allowing Lenin to eventually embrace federalism. See Leokadiia Mikhailovna Drobizheva, "O problemakh mezhnatsional'nykh otnoshenii i zadachakh etnosotsiologii v sovremennykh usloviiakh," *Sovetskaia etnografiia* (January/February 1989), p. 43.

10. Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, "On the Manifesto of the Armenian Social Democrats," *Iskra* (February 1, 1903), in Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6 (Moscow: Progress, 1964). Lenin argued against federalism in his polemics with the Bund, which resolved at its Fourth Congress (1901) that "a state like Russia consisting of many different nationalities, must in the future, transform itself into a federation of nationalities with full cultural autonomy for each, regardless of the territory which it inhabits." See Dmitri Von Mohrenshildt, *Toward a United States of Russia: Plans and Projects of Federal Reconstruction of Russia in the Nineteenth Century* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981), p. 229.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it is only in isolated and exceptional cases that we can advance and actively support demands conducive to the establishment of a new class state or to the substitution of a looser federal unity, etc., for the complete political unity of the state."[11]

In 1913, Lenin wrote to Stepan Shaumian that federalism would loosen economic links and undermine the notion of a single state. Yet he asserted that nations should have the right to secede "owing to reactionary, Great-Russian nationalism, which has so besmirched the idea of national coexistence that sometimes closer ties will be established after free secession!"[12] While this is hardly a glowing endorsement of federalism, by April 1916 Lenin seemed to waver: "Recognition of self-determination is not synonymous with recognition of federation as a principle. One may be a determined opponent of that principle and a champion of democratic centralism but still prefer federation to national inequality as the only way to full democratic centralism. It was from this standpoint that Marx, who was a centralist, preferred even the federation of Ireland and England to the forcible subordination of Ireland to the English."[13]

After 1917, Lenin became a fierce advocate of a provisional federal form of government. The outline of the Bolshevik Draft Program for the Seventh Party Congress [1918] includes Lenin's insistence that a federation is "a transition to a voluntary fusion" after workers have risen above national dissension.[14] This is because a "federation is in no way in contradiction to democratic centralism . . . federation is very often merely a transitional step towards really democratic centralism."[15] This is Lenin's final position on the federal question. Thus federalism became a temporary form of state construction suitable to Lenin for accommodating national interests. With the world-wide victory of socialism, however, nations would be fused into a "single world Soviet republic."[16] This is a

---

11. Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, "The National Question in Our Programme," *Iskra* (July 15, 1903), in *Collected Works*, Vol. 6 (Moscow: Progress, 1964), p. 454.

12. Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, "A Letter to S. G. Shahumyan, 6 December 1913," in Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol. 19 (Moscow: Progress, 1964), p. 501.

13. Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, "Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," *Vorbote* (April 1916), in Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22 (Moscow: Progress, 1964), p. 146.

14. Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, "Rough Outline of the Draft Programme (Seventh Congress of the R.C.P. (B.)," *Kommunist* (9 March 1918), in Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27 (Moscow: Progress, 1964), pp. 155, 158.

15. "Original Version of the Article 'The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government'," dictated March 28, 1918, in Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27 (Moscow: Progress, 1964), p. 207.

16. Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, "Letter to the Workers and Peasants of the Ukraine

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

critical difference from other forms of federalism. Given the disorder which followed the Civil War, Lenin set aside this broader theoretical framework so as to favor a new political order, a federation, which may have been the most centralized form of government possible at the time.

This helps explain the failure of the federation under Stalin. As Thomas Franck writes, federations fail because of "the absence of a sufficient political-ideological commitment to the primary concept or value of federation itself."[17] In the Soviet case, the primary commitment was to class struggle. Thus Kunitsyn is mistaken when he claims that Lenin and Stalin formed "two galaxies which were found in an antagonistic incompatibility in relation to one another."[18] While Lenin saw federation as part of the transition to centralism, Stalin sought an immediate consolidated Union within a nominally federal framework. In fact, Stalin soon found that such a nominal federalism presented no threat to vanguard politics. The Party apparatus served as the main conduit between the separate republics as well as between the nation's periphery and the center. Formal relations between regional actors were strictly controlled. In essence, the Soviet republics were given the right of "potential sovereignty" through the right to secession — a privilege which was not guaranteed through institutional means.[19] National unity would grow in accordance with the process of *sliianie* (merging). This concept originated with Lenin, who claimed that *sliianie* would take place only after the transition to socialism, and was more fully developed in later years. Accordingly, state policies were to seek the elimination of all national distinctions within the USSR. This was not so much the "withering away of the state" as the "withering away of state boundaries." Thus the Soviet "federation" was designed to dissolve into a polity whose basic features were outlined in Lenin's *State and Revolution*. Stalin's methods may not have been to Lenin's liking, but *sliianie* was unquestionably Leninist in content.

There were few radical changes under Brezhnev. Stalin had deliberately avoided establishing a Russian republic and Party apparatus, which allowed Russians to obtain disproportional representation in all-Union

---

Apropos of the Victories Over Denikin," *Pravda* (January 4,1920), in Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30 (Moscow: Progress, 1964), p. 293.

17. Thomas Franck, "Why Federations Fail," in Thomas M. Franck, ed., *Why Federations Fail: An Inquiry into the Requisites for Successful Federalism* (New York: New York University, 1968), p. 177.

18. Georgii Ivanovich Kunitsyn, "Samoopredelenie natsii — istoriia voprosa i sovremennost'," *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 5 (1989), p. 68.

19. See David Lvovich Zlatopol'skii, "Natsional'naia gosudarstvennost' Soiuznykh respublik: nekotorye aktual'nye problemy," *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i pravo*, No. 4 (1989), pp. 12-20.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

organs and to dominate policy-making.[20] Regional autonomy grew, but *sliianie* was by no means discarded. The 1977 Constitution emphasized the primary role of the center and minimized national distinctions. The equal rights of all citizens would be ensured by the "drawing together" of all nations [Article 36] and making it the "duty" of all citizens to strengthen the friendship of all Soviet nations [Article 64]. Nonetheless, contemporary Soviet theorists still emphaze state-building under Lenin and Stalin, frequently skipping over the Brezhnev era as the "period of stagnation."

In the absence of a broad consensus on state unity, federalism's success in the Soviet Union would depend on a number of factors. Despite the rapid decentralization of the Party and the "federalization" of the Politburo, leading Party cadres have typically used their position to frustrate the federalist project, even while decrying Party centralism by supporting such measures as the creation of a Russian Party. They often see federal policies in the context of the emerging soviets as a threat to their ability to influence local politics. Meanwhile, the soviets are not only frequently engaged in a struggle with the Party, but themselves have difficulty in establishing an apparatus throughout the union capable of enforcing central directives.[21]

The Federal Debate

The question of federalism in the Soviet Union has revolved around whether calls to return to a "Leninist" federation are primarily symbolic in character, or if they indicate a theoretical stake in a "federal" form which, while decentralized, would not challenge the Party. Soviet academics are not always for federalism, nor are Party members united around a policy of centralism. The editors of *Sovetskaia etnografiia* [*Soviet Ethnography*][22] have noted the emergence of factions within the academic community, including a "radical wing" which calls for a confederation of independent states and an orthodox faction which continues to rely on

20. Kunitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

21. Indeed, it is the uncertain status of property throughout the Union which led Marina Sale, an influential deputy of the Leningrad Soviet, to assert in an interview with the author in July 1990 that the Soviet deputies would soon become "kamikazes" who would "go down in flames" during the struggle over the transfer of property, possibly to be replaced by an authoritarian military government. The accuracy of this statement is less important than the fact that it reflects a strong and apparently widespread concern with the political stability of the new government apparatus.

22. "Redaktsionnyi kommentarii k rubrike [Navstrechu plenumu TsK KPSS po sovershenstvovaniiu mezhnatsional'nykh otnoshenii v SSSR]," *Sovetskaia etnografiia* (January/February 1989), p. 90.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

classic Marxist-Leninist analysis. Political factions largely conform to these same divisions. What emerges in these debates are a series of concepts which have little practical analytical application, such as *khozraschet*, and a corresponding set of specific proposals which do not propound a universal vision of the Soviet state system's future.

For example, a successful federal system is predicated on designing juridical measures amenable to conflict mediation and the resolution of political disputes in a manner acceptable to the federal units and central institutions. *Pravda* itself recognizes that "legal relations are like blood vessels linking all parts of the state organism."[23] Rules must not only be drafted, they must be followed by all. Extra-legal activity, including corruption, threatens the rough balance of political functions granted to each republic, i.e., socialist legalism must become procedural in essence, or the federal system is likely to break down into a confederation or centralized polity. The problem is so pronounced in the Soviet Union that Iulian Bromlei calls for the creation of a new legal field, proposing that "the new jurisprudence should include 'national rights,' a field analogous to 'civil rights'."[24] The issues center on the latitude given to the political center and to the periphery to "lay claim" over the individual, incorporating not only the granting of privileges and rights, including property, but the generation of specific responsibilities as well. Both center and periphery acknowledge that control over citizenship is the key to national sovereignty. The Union's resolution of this issue will determine how the state will recognize an essential element of social stratification. This decision, in turn, will influence the distribution of resources to specific sectors of the population, including national minorities, the determination of voting rights, directions and levels of migration, and the dominance of this or that language in each political jurisdiction. An emphasis on regional citizenship clearly implies confederation or secession.

Secessionist movements are supported by those concerned with changing the status of regional sub-units. There are currently four regional hierarchical levels of Soviet state institutions: autonomous *okrugs*, autonomous *oblasts*, autonomous republics, and union republics. Each has differing levels of political representation. For example, an ethnic group with its own autonomous republic is represented by eleven deputies in the Congress of Peoples Deputies, while those with an

23. "Establishing People's Power," *Pravda* (June 29, 1989), 2nd ed., p. 1, in *Daily Report: Soviet Union* (June 29, 1989), p. 47.

24. Iulian Vladimirovich Bromlei, "O razrabotke natsional'noi problematiki v svete reshenii XIX Partkonferentsii," *Sovetskaia etnografiia* (January/February 1989), p. 9.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

autonomous *okrug* have only one.[25] Problems arise here concerning the political relation between these four levels and the procedures to determine when is it necessary or desirable to form new territorial units, eliminate others, change boundaries, or upgrade the status of a given region. Ethnographic research has already been commissioned to establish accurate representations of contemporary national groupings, which fell from 208 in the 1926 census to 120 in the 1979 census.[26] Few ethnic groups settle in territorial patterns easy to delineate, a fact frequently cited by conservatives.[27] Nonetheless, proposals for radical changes have arisen throughout the Union. For example, an initiative group has called for the merging of the Tatar and Bashkir autonomous republics into a single republic and the creation of the Eveno-Bytantayskii Raion in the Yakut ASSR.[28] While Starushenko criticizes the draft nationalities Platform for not taking greater initiative in redrawing national districts, others see a fundamental injustice in establishing an institutionalized hierarchy of national groupings.[29] In particular, it is often noted that autonomous formations in the Russian republic tend to suffer from lower levels of socio-economic development.[30]

The basic problem here is the Party's definition of the republics' sovereignty in terms of *khozraschet*. This limits the prospect of a decentralization of political power to the republics, but could nonetheless have important political consequences in the future. The Latvian economy is a good example. In January 1988, 21.8% of basic industrial funds were reportedly under Latvian supervision, 50.2% were under joint union and republic control, and 28% were under all-Union

---

25. Vladimir Sokolov, "Demokratiia ili granitsy," *Literaturnaia gazeta* (August 2, 1989), p. 10.

26. Klara Khallik, "Natsional'nye otnosheniia v SSSR i problemy perestroiki," (Tallinn: Dom politprosveshcheniia i Universitet Marksizma-Leninizma TsK KP Estonii, 1988), pp. 8-9.

27. See, for example, Sergei Cheshko,"Ekonomicheskii suverenitet i natsional'nyi vopros," *Kommunist*, No. 2 (1989), pp. 97-105.

28. Rafael Mustafin, "The USSR is Our Common Home," *Pravda* (January 25, 1989), p. 3, in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* (February 22, 1989), p. 1; "New Russian National-Territorial Rayon Created," *Sovetskaia Rossiia* (August 19, 1989), p. 1, in *Daily Report: Soviet Union* (August 30, 1989), p. 56.

29. See Gleb Starushenko, "O vozmozhnostiakh samoopredeleniia," *Pravda* (September 17, 1989), p. 3.; Iurii Grishaev, Leokadiia Mikhailovna Drobizheva, V. K. Mal'kova, and Galina Vasilevna Starovoitova, "Rezoliutsiia 'kruglogo stola': Suverenitet respublika i tselostnost' federatsii; provedennogo Sektsiei Etnicheskoi Sotsiologii i Sektsiei Sotsiologii Natsional'no-Politicheskikh Otnoshenii Sovetskoi Sotsiologicheskoi Assotsiatsii (19.01.89, Moskva)," in *Chto Delat': V poiskakh idei sovershenstvovaniia mezhnatsional'nykh otnoshenii v SSSR* (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1989), p. 108.

30. Khallik, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

supervision.[31] The transfer of the latter funds to republic control will greatly strengthen Latvian autonomy. Economic problems are often cited as the primary cause of national conflict, which results in calls for economic reform.[32] *Khozraschet* has been interpreted as complete economic independence, but the Platform gives the Union the right to determine the general directions of economic policy. On a regional level, the term has little or no meaning. Does *khozraschet* mean that a region can go bankrupt? If it means regional economic autonomy, how can there be a uniform economic policy of enterprise *khozraschet* throughout the Union? If it applies only to enterprises, how does it encompass the notion of republic sovereignty? Whatever the policy, if applied unevenly it can complicate federal unification by leading to charges that certain republics are receiving undue economic privileges, or to complaints about the establishment of trade barriers. As Gandilov notes, if *khozraschet* is the essence of sovereignty, then different levels of *khozraschet* will lead to different levels of sovereignty.[33]

Party officials generally support limited regional *khozraschet* and a continued reliance on planning. Vadim Medvedev observed in early 1989 that complete economic independence would lead to economic isolationism on the part of some of the republics not particularly inclined to ship goods outside of their borders.[34] In July 1989, Gorbachev announced to a group of Leningrad workers that the 5-year plan would allow the country to produce a normal level of food supplies as well as enable the country to "soberly" assimilate new economic reforms.[35] The vagueness of the *khozraschet* policy leaves room for a wide range of proposals concerning economic reform in general. If *khozraschet* is based on the profitability of the republics, then it should not be introduced in Central Asia, but should be allowed to proceed in the more developed regions of the USSR.[36] The disposition of a central fund to aid less-developed republics is seen as a violation of the essence of *khozraschet*, especially when understood as cultivating a decentralized market. Others fear that the level of republic contributions to the fund will lead to political

31. One might reasonably guess that many of the joint projects were dominated by the center. See "Slyshat' drug druga," *Kommunist*, No. 6 (1989), pp. 62-80.
32. See Bromlei, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
33. T. Gandilov, "Granitsa vlasti," *Pravda* (September 5, 1989), p. 3.
34. Vadim Medvedev, "K poznaniiu sotsializma: Otvety na voprosy zhurnala *Kommunist*," *Kommunist Estoniia*, No. 2 (1989), p. 22.
35. "M. S. Gorbachev's Conversation with 'Izhorskii Zavod' Association," *Pravda* (August 20, 1989), pp. 1-2, in *Daily Report: Soviet Union* (August 21, 1989), pp. 40-41.
36. Bromlei, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

conflict.[37] In order to alleviate such conflicts, it has been suggested that the Council of Nationalities should have control over these contributions and expenditures.[38] Such policies are unlikely to alleviate the resentment that more developed republics, particularly the Baltic states, are likely to express at the loss of resources when they themselves are resource-poor *vis à vis* Western Europe. Soviet federalists face the virtually insurmountable challenge of striking a balance between the East's daunting economic needs and the West's political dissatisfaction.

Debates between center and periphery also deal with the issue of state and national languages. Switzerland's federal integrity was enhanced by the willingness of central authorities to grant the cantons significant autonomy in language policies. The future of Soviet federalism will depend on the state's ability to endorse a language of inter-republic communication acceptable to every regional unit while tolerating the use of national languages in an official capacity at the republic level.[39] Calls for cultural renewal and local autonomy have included demands for increased attention to regional language education and usage. The traditional dominance of the Russian language has had a tremendous social impact on the republics. Krupnik finds that, for millions, bilingualism actually means "semi-lingualism" [*poluiazychie*], as people cannot always effectively assimilate two languages.[40] Others note that the smallest national minorities face a choice of learning Russian, the republic language, or their own tongue, and are naturally drawn to the former languages as they provide wider opportunities for education and advancement.[41] This trend seems plausible, as the number of non-Russians claiming Russian as their native language grew from 10.2 to 16.3 million people from

37. A. I. Doronchenkov and Gregorii Ivanov, "Voprosy teorii i praktiki mezhnatsional'nykh otnoshenii v usloviiakh perestroiki," *Voprosy istorii KPSS* (June 1989), p. 33. Thus, e.g., Bronshtein, a member of The Estonian Academy of Sciences, was opposed to contributions that could be directed towards the diversion of rivers in Central Asia or other "economic adventures." See "Slyshat' drug druga," *op. cit.*, p. 64.

38. Algimantas Prazauskas, "Federalism i prava narodov," in *Chto Delat': V poiskakh idei sovershenstvovaniia mezhnatsional'nykh otnoshenii v SSSR* (Moscow: Nauk SSSR, 1989), p. 83.

39. It is interesting to note that the question of language has been one of many delicate political issues being dealt with by the European community. See, for example, Werner Ebke, "Enforcement Techniques Within the European Communities: Flying Close to the Sun With Waxen Wings," *The Journal of Air Law and Commerce*, Nos. 3/4 (1985), especially p. 710.

40. Igor Ilich Krupnik, "Mnogonatsional'noe obshchestvo (Sostoianie natsional 'nykh otnoshenii v SSSR i zadachi nauki)," *Sovetskaia etnografiia* (January/February 1989), p. 52.

41. Mikhail Nikolaevich Guboglo,"Natsional'nye gruppy v SSSR," *Kommunist*, No. 10 (1989), p. 55.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1959-1979.[42] These debates extend to the adoption of a common state language. The traditional role of the Russian language has been challenged in a number of areas, including the Baltic states and Moldavia. Providing for republic use of local languages at the government level interferes with the efficiency of inter-republic and center-periphery communication. On the other hand, a regional language's social and cultural functions are widened by state usage — an argument which many Soviets find compelling.[43] There is no apparent unity on this issue, but there seems to be a general grudging acceptance of Russian as the only possible language for inter-republic communication.[44]

Additional questions arise in connection with dispersed national groupings. The primary dispute centers around those rights that should be granted to all Soviet citizens at the expense of republic sovereignty. The 1979 census determined that 24 million Russians and 15 million representatives of other nationalities live outside the boundaries of their native republics, while another 7 million have no national formation whatsoever.[45] Every fifth Soviet citizen is a minority — a fact which leads some to demand greater legislative protection of minority rights.[46] Such rights are frequently perceived as conflicting with republic rights. This has led to tensions in Lithuania, which is upset about the demands of its Polish minority for regional autonomy, and in Estonia, which has attempted to restrict the voting rights of Russians. In the Soviet Union, however, minority status is predominantly determined on regional rather than all-Union terms, leading to a paradoxical situation where the predominant Russian nationality is considered a minority in regions outside the Russian republic, such as the Baltic states. There is additional sensitivity over the national composition of all-Union organs. Gorbachev has proposed establishing a collegium to replace the presidency, which would include representatives of all republics and would be created after the passage of a public referendum on the proposal.[47] The latest Politburo, which now includes the first secretary of each republic, is a tentative step towards a new Soviet form of "affirmative action," though it is

42. Khallik, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
43. See Narbai Khudaiberganov, "Ot diagnoza — k lecheniiu," *Pravda* (August 25, 1989), p. 2.
44. One notable exception is S. I. Treskova, who proposed adopting English as the Soviet Union's state language. See Nataliia Iakovlevna Daragan and V. V. Koroteeva,"Obzor vystuplenii," *Sovetskaia etnografiia* (January/February 1989), p. 58.
45. Guboglo, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
47. "Mikhail S. Gorbachev's Conversation With 'Izhorskii Zavod' Association," *op. cit.*, p. 46.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

widely recognized that the communist "credentials" of these secretaries generally undermine their status as national representatives.[48]

The most important issue, however, is the role of the Party in Soviet political development. The Congress clearly undermines the Party's exclusive role in the country, but it is still not clear when the locus of political power will shift to Soviet parliamentary institutions. One might consider, for example, Party representation within the Congress itself. While a number of Party officials lost in the 1989 elections, 1,716 (87.6%) of the deputies elected in the first round were Party members or candidate members, 114 (5.8%) were members of the Komsomol, and 242 (12.4%) had no Party affiliation.[49] These figures become even more remarkable when it is taken into account that in the 1984 Supreme Soviet only 71.4% of the deputies were Party members.[50]

The percentage of those in upper and middle level administration remained virtually unchanged, dropping from 40.0% in 1984 to 39.8% in 1989. Yet the percentage of regional representatives has dropped. From 1984-1989, the number of first and second secretaries of union republic central committees and of *oblast*, *krai*, and city Party committees fell from 12.1% to 7.6%.[51] Thus the Party faces a paradoxical situation in which it has greater representation in the Congress but less control over the policies drafted by its members. This can be directly traced to the relatively democratic participation of Congress deputies in debates, the identification of lower echelon, non-official, and some higher-echelon delegates with their native republics, and the accountability of delegates to the voters. Still, these figures suggest that the Congress could be influenced by the Party's ability to reestablish internal discipline.One might imagine a situation whereby a revitalized Party, having reestablished internal discipline, begins to dominate the policies of the Soviets. This, however, is not what is occurring, nor is such a situation likely when the political struggle has clearly expanded beyond the traditional fight between the Party and the soviets to embrace intense competition within the Party apparatus itself.

Finally, as the primary anchor of Soviet political life, the role and

48. "Professor Interviewed on National Subdivisions," *Komsomolskaia Pravda* (August 24, 1989), in *Daily Report: Soviet Union* (August 30, 1989), p. 79.

49. "Report of the Central Electoral Commission on the Results of the 1989 Elections of USSR People's Deputies," *Izvestiia* (April 5, 1989), p. 1, in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* (May 3,1989), p. 10.

50. Alla Nazimova and Viktor Sheinis, "The Choice Has Been Made," *Izvestiia* (May 6, 1989), p. 3, in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* (May 31, 1989), p. 5.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

status of the Russian republic is a critical obstacle to federalism. First, Russians have infused and dominated all-Union Party and government organs. As a result, the Party is seen by other groups in nationalist as well as political terms. Second, Russians are associated with the forcible acquisition of territory and the purges of national representatives.[52] Third, there is a sharp rise in Russian nationalist activism which is finding resonance within the Russian republic. A recent survey found that some Russians even believe that giving money to preserve historical monuments is as important as housing or health requirements.[53] Fourth, there has been a persistent out-migration of Russians to the other republics. This migration has continued apace: 75% from 1926 to 1939, 74.3% from 1939 to 1959, and 47.5% from 1959 to 1979. Russians make up approximately 40% of the population of Kazakhstan, 20% of the Ukraine, 33% of Estonia and Latvia, 25% of the Kirghiz S.S.R., 12% of Moldavia, Belorussia, Azerbaijan, and the Turkmen S.S.R., and 10% of Uzbekistan and Tadzhikistan.[54] Russians are also highly urbanized in comparison with other groups, but the total Russian population has declined in proportion to all other nationalities. Fifth, the Russian republic itself contains some 80 nationalities, with an 82.6% Russian majority.[55] As a result, it faces serious internal pressures for granting each minority its autonomy. Finally, the Russian republic is a dominant economic and military presence within the Union. As such, all of the republics experience some degree of dependency on it.

There have been a number of proposals to normalize relations between the Russian republic and the USSR.[56] Instead, the Russian republic

52. Kazbek Gizatov defends Russians from these charges by noting that they themselves suffered from the purges. Similarly, I. Isachenkov asks if "Stalin, Beria, Rashidov," and others were Russian, and whether Russians are to blame for the corrupt economies of other republics. See Kazbek Gizatov, "Protivorechiia i ikh proiavlenie v natsional'noi psikhologii," *Kommunist*, No. 11 (1989), p. 60; I. Isachenkov,"Komu vygodna rozn'," *Pravda* (September 6, 1989), p. 3.

53. Leokadiia Mikhailovna Drobizheva, "O problemakh mezhnatsional'nykh otnoshenii i zadachakh etnosotsiologii v sovremennykh usloviiakh," *Sovetskaia etnografiia* (January/February 1989), p. 46.

54. Khallik, *op. cit.*, p. 11. It might be noted that there has been a south to north migration pattern from 1979 to 1987. See Richard H. Rowland, "Union Republic Migration Trends in the USSR During the 1980s," *Soviet Geography* (November 1988), p. 813.

55. Zlatopol'skii, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

56. Bromlei has suggested that some of these problems could be resolved by granting Moscow a status analogous to the US District of Columbia. Zlatopol'skii has called for the formation of a bicameral Russian Supreme Soviet, with a Council of Republics representing all the peoples of the Russian republic and a Council of the Autonomies. According to Zlatopol'skii, this would greatly strengthen the representation of autonomous units

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seems to be establishing itself as a political force capable of dominating the center. This is already evident in Yeltsin's ability to effectively challenge Soviet economic policies. The new Russian Communist Party, which used fervent nationalist rhetoric to justify its existence, may pose a similar challence to the CPSU. Rather than becoming an equal partner in a federation, the Russian republic is maximizing its political and economic clout within the union. It is fully capable of doing so, as some 80% of foreign currency revenues are accounted for by Russian enterprises.[57]

A Changing Platform

The September 1989 Platform contains a number of provisions which suggest that the Party has not been pursuing genuine federalism. Instead, it sought to maintain the nations strong centralism with only limited decentralization of power to the periphery. In particular, the final Platform incorporated a number of important changes in the draft Platform published in August 1989 which suggested that the Party was having second thoughts about federalism. Furthermore, it is unclear to what extent the Supreme Soviet, the new Congress of People's Deputies or the Party itself will take responsibility for adopting an alternative set of state policies, even after the calls for state autonomy at the February 1990 Plenum.

The draft Platform was probably put together by Medvedev, although little is known about its specific origins.[58] The Platform itself

---

and national minorities in the republic. This model is not recommended for republics with less that three nationalities, and is specifically tailored for the needs of the Russian republic. Vitalii Vorotnikov's latest proposal is to reject bicameralism in the Russian republic's Supreme Soviet, as only 17.4% of its population live in autonomous units, but to create four autonomous *okrugs* for every autonomous republic (regardless of population), and to include a representative from every autonomous formation in the chamber with "equal" proportional representation. See Iulian Vladimirovich Bromlei, "O razrabotke natsional'noi problematiki k Plenumu TsK KPSS," in *Chto Delat'? V poiskakh idei sovershenstvovaniia mezhnatsional'nykh otnoshenii v SSSR* (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1989), pp. 19-37; Zlatopol'skii, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-20; and V. Terekhov, "Russia Open to Perestroika: Interview With Vitali I. Vorotnikov, Member of the CPSU Central Committee Politburo and Chairman of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic Supreme Soviet Presidium," *Sovetskaia Rossiia* (September 3, 1989), in *Daily Report: Soviet Union* (September 11, 1989), p. 68.

57. Terekhov, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

58. Vorotnikov makes it clear that he did not participate in the drafting of the Platform, but that the entire leadership agreed with its proposals. According to former Politburo member Viktor Chebrikov, the Platform was the fruit of "collective work," and thousands of people, including representatives from every republic, took part. See Terekhov, *op. cit.*, p. 69; V. Poshataev and A. Cherniak, "Obnovliaia nasional'nuiu politiku: Chlen Politburo, sekretar' TsK KPSS Viktor M. Chebrikov otvechaet na poprosy *Pravdy*," *Pravda* (August 19, 1989), p. 1.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had six sections, beginning with a brief analysis of the history of nationality relations, which noted Lenin's opting for federation.[59] Still, the Platform argued that national demands have not been fully considered, and called for a struggle against anything which does not conform to "socialist ideals and principles." Criticism was directed at the administrative-command system, mass repressions, discrepancies in regional development, ecological destruction, and an improper understanding by the Party of how to balance integration and autonomy. The country was to be transformed into a Soviet federation in which there would be a widening of regional rights, the provision of equal rights to all peoples, a new climate favorable to cultural and linguistic development, and the renewal of educational efforts concerning nationality relations.

The second and most important section outlined eight measures needed to convert to a federation: 1) To clearly delineate between the competencies of the Union and the republics. The Union was to be granted legislative competencies for determining the basis of the political and economic system, defense and security, foreign policy, coordinating common economic tasks, guaranteeing individual rights, maintaining integration processes, and ensuring economic development. Republics were to be granted all rights corresponding to their status as "sovereign governments." This means being given the right to resolve all questions of state and public life except those granted to the Union, to participate in the Union government, and to question all-Union laws; 2) To give the republics sovereignty by granting the right to *khozraschet* and self-financing, the right to the disposition of their resources, and the right to choose their own economic methods, while the Union would manage an all-Union budget designed to develop more backward regions; 3) To grant each republic its own citizenship, and to provide that every republic citizen is also a citizen of the USSR.; 4) To grant the Union the right to conduct foreign policy, while allowing the republics to establish international contacts; 5) To entrust the Union to provide for the security of the republics; 6) To keep the Party centralized, and to allow social organizations to determine the content of their relations with the Union; 7) To resolve the status of the Russian republic; and 8) To recognize that the 1922 Treaty is still valid, but that a new Declaration on the USSR might be incorporated into the Constitution.

---

59. The following quotes and analysis are from "Natsional'naia politika Partii v sovremennykh usloviiakh (platforma KPSS)," *Pravda* (August 17, 1989), pp. 1-2. See also "Draft Nationalities Policy of the Party Under Present Conditions (CPSU Platform), adopted by the CPSU Central Committee Plenum 20 September 1989," *Pravda* (September 24, 1989), pp. 1-2, in *Daily Report: Soviet Union* (September 25, 1989), pp. 98-108.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Still, Gorbachev opened the September 19, 1989 Plenum with a sharp criticism of past Party policies which, nonetheless, took a tough centralist line. He further rejected the transformation of autonomous republics into union republics, opposed changes in territorial boundaries, attacked "extremist" gatherings, warned that "decisive measures" would be taken in Nagorno-Karabakh, and supported the use of Russian as an all-Union language. He defended the political role of the Party while rejecting its federalization, which would "mean the end of our Party in the form founded by Lenin."[60] Many of these themes were taken up by the Plenum participants. The discussion of the Platform, however, was marked by sharp disagreements about the future course of Soviet nationality relations. Indeed, the greatest disagreements were sparked by the the Baltic states. Brazauskas, first secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party, said that a union of equal states "is a qualitatively higher stage of development than a federation," called for economic autonomy, and rejected the majority of positions taken at the Plenum by proposing the autonomy of the Lithuanian Communist Party. Vayno Vyalyas, the first Secretary of the Estonian Communist Party, noted that "processes in the Soviet Baltic republics have become an argument sometimes in favor of *perestroika* but often against it," and said that his party seeks a sovereign Estonia and a differentiated all-Union approach to each republic.[61]

The disagreements at the Plenum resulted in a final Platform that was even more centralized in essence than the draft copy. Instead of transforming the Union into a federation, the Party was intent on improving the existing federation — a critical change in emphasis. It stated that republics "possess" all rights consistent with their status as sovereign members of a federation; earlier, these rights were to be "transferred" to the republics. A new paragraph maintained that the Union would publish a code of laws which have equal weight throughout the territory of the USSR. Republics lost the right to determine the "disposal" of their resources, and could instead only pass laws on the "use" of resources consistent with all-Union legislation. Gorbachev concluded the Plenum with the assertion that "everyone came out unanimously for Party unity — in full accord with Lenin, who was for a federation of peoples, for a

60. Ann Sheehy, "Gorbachev Addresses Central Committee Plenum on Nationalities Question," *Radio Liberty Research* (September 2, 1989), in SOVSET (September 25, 1989).

61. "On the Basis of Leninist Principles, Toward a New Quality of Interethnic Relations. Debate at CPSU Central Committee Plenum," *Pravda* (September 21, 1989), pp. 1-7, in *Daily Report: Soviet Union* (September 22, 1989), pp. 54-55.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Union government, but who categorically rejected federalism in the functioning of the Party."[62]

Conclusion

Institutions and constitutions are only secondary isssues in classifying a country as "federal." This applies to the September 1989 Party Platform. It did not reflect a new sense of commitment to a federal polity. Nor was it a call for a Leninist federation, since such a federation would be theoretically engaged in class struggle — something no longer accepted. Rather than outlining the political revolution necessary for a transition to federalism, the Platform only granted some measure of cultural and economic autonomy to the republics. These reforms were significant, but they could not create a union of relatively equal states united by a strong central government. Federalism cannot be imposed by the center. It must follow agreements acceptable to each regional unit. The final Platform envisaged a Soviet Union with a more efficient economy based on the abandonment of central planning, accompanied by a society guided by an enlightened Party. The lack of aggressive reforms aimed at introducing an independent judiciary was particularly evident. Most important, however, was the fact that a centralized Party is incompatible with federalism. The "glue" which holds a federal society together cannot be a party. Rather, it must be a strong sense of mutual advantage which arises when regional structures and needs are largely compatible. Regional needs can be articulated partly through separate Party institutions, although keeping such institutions can also lead to calls for confederation or secession.

A great deal of uncertainty also surrounds tensions sparked by union and republic citizenship. The level of state autonomy at the republic level may exceed the guidelines of the Platform as a result of factors outside the Party's control. New regions may have to be created for national minorities. Geographic and demographic realities, such as the size of the Russian republic and the high birth rate in Central Asia enhance the inequality of the republics. The role of the Russian language will remain problematic, as many Soviets will associate its use with greater social mobility. Russians continue to disproportionately dominate the Party. National resentments between specific national groups seems almost insurmountable. Finally, the Party itself is becoming increasingly isolated internationally as it disintegrates internally.

62. "Zakliuchitel'noe slovo M. S. Gorbacheva na Plenume TsK KPSS 20 Sentiabria 1989 goda," *Pravda* (September 22, 1989), p. 1.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Current events strongly suggest a partial confederation of the union. This conclusion is borne out by Gorbachev's speech at the February 1990 Plenum that welcomed different federal ties between the republics. The Baltic states have taken this a step further by pursuing complete political independence, while aggressively attempting to establish economic autonomy. The former goal is being implemented through declarations of secession. The latter is problematic, but the three republics have agreed to establish a common market by 1993. While the Baltic states consolidate their autonomous status, the status of the Caucasus remains an additional question mark.[63] Central Asia, with its massive economic and demographic problems, will probably do all it can to ensure that it remain a part of the USSR. Baltic autonomy would not result in the elimination of the region's dependence on the Soviet economy, and Western aid to the Baltic states would most likely be limited. As a result, the Baltic states would continue to play an important role in the Soviet economy even after they obtained political autonomy. Given such an outcome, the Soviet Union itself will continue to experiment cautiously with economic and social reform, while many of the republics will seek nothing less than an economic, social and political revolution.

The reconstruction of a new Soviet "edifice" might necessitate demolishing the "Baltic wing." This would not only soothe moral qualms by releasing a region which was subjected to forced annexation, but it also could result in a more stable structure. Closer ties with Europe may be of greater importance than the loss of a relatively small, dependent region. As the Soviet Union slowly modernizes and faces internal division, it also recognizes that the Baltic secession may eliminate one serious obstacle to integration with the rest of Europe. Ultimately, however, such integration depends on much deeper internal political, economic, and social forces. The Soviet Union faces the daunting task of working out closer ties with the European Community, while striving to preserve its own integrity. Within such a context, domestic federalism is very likely to fall by the wayside.

---

63. The desperate situation in the region was outlined by Tishkov, who noted that "[t]here are tanks in Erevan, and people are talking about referendums." See Valerii Aleksandrovich Tishkov, "O kontseptsii perestroiki mezhnatsional'nykh otnoshenii v SSSR," *Sovetskaia etnografiia* (January/February 1989), p. 89. "Zakliuchitel'noe slovo M. S. Gorbacheva na Plenume TsK KPSS 20 Sentiabria 1989 goda," *Pravda* (September 22, 1989), p. 1.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Making of the New Soviet Left

Patrick Flaherty

As *perestroika* gathered momentum, an inchoate opposition sprang up from the counter-cultural grassroots in the Soviet Union which the Brezhnev government had never fully succeeded in eliminating. With the discreet sponsorship of establishment liberals, disparate groups managed to consolidate into an umbrella organization by August 1987. Since then, it has undergone a rapid succession of mergers, splits and other restructurings. These groups receive little media coverage in the West, despite the fact that a number of their once heretical political ideas have made their way into the mainstream of the reform debate.

The Soviet Left can be defined provisionally in very broad terms, as was done by Sogrin regarding the first stage of *perestroika*, as comprising all those political groups seeking a "radical dismantling of the existing system."[1] Accordingly, the Soviet Left now comprises militant anarcho-syndicalists as well as elitist neo-liberals. As the crisis intensifies, however, latent rifts within what was a homogeneous bloc unified around a contradictory program may result in a sharper ideological polarization. The second stage of *perestroika* may see political battle lines redrawn around issues involving the redistribution of social power instead of merely administrative authority. Democratization would then replace liberalization as the main objective of the reform. The Left would comprise those social forces seeking to push reforms beyond the liberal self-limiting revolution of replacing a *nomenklatura* political monopoly with a technocratic pluralism of elites.

This conflict has already been prefigured by the preliminary results

1. Vladimir Sogrin, *Kommunist*, No. 3 (1990), p. 34

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the first timid experiments in factory administrative elections, which neo-liberals characterize as "lamentable," while demanding their immediate suspension.[2] Today, any study of the Soviet Left must pick its way through the equivocations of the political rhetoric of *perestroika* to distinguish between its liberalizing and democratizing thrusts.[3]

Party Renovators and the Informals

There are now almost 3000 Informals in the Soviet Union with a rapidly growing membership of at least two million.[4] The head of the Moscow party organization estimates that there are 1500 such groups active in the capital alone.[5] Of these, 150 are overtly political and 32 command substantial popular support. Public demonstrations drew 12.6 million people in 1989, and the pace of repoliticization of Soviet society was best illustrated by the fact that the first two months of 1990 have already seen 7.5 million take part in demonstrations.[6] This political reawakening enabled the Left, united under the banner of "Democratic Russia" to capture 60-70% of the seats on the Moscow city council, and to force *apparatchiki* and conservatives to establish a minority faction.[7]

Why then is Gorbachev not only permitting but actually encouraging this grassroots ferment? Party reformers are primarily concerned with realigning administrative power within the Soviet ruling class. Modernizing elements inside the power elite have drawn the lesson from previous abortive reform attempts that any restratification will be stymied by conservative resistance unless they take their campaign to the public and rally popular support under the universalistic banner of political liberalization.[8] But the demolition of the neo-Stalinist power structures has unleashed long pent-up resentment, and the reform government had to find ways of coopting these volatile social energies.

---

2. Vvacerii Chichkanov, *Izvestiia* (April 3, 1990).
3. Many Soviet commentators were impressed by the sweep of the opposition in the spring 1990 elections. But the more astute observers also pointed to the vagueness of its campaign program, and its heterogeneity. See Pavel Gutiontov, *Izvestiia* (April 6, 1990).
4. Gleb Pavlovskii and Maksim Meer, *Moskovskie Novosti*, No. 7 (1990) The term "Informals" or "*Neformaly*" refers to the autonomous political and cultural clubs which have been organized during *perestroika*.
5. Iurii Prokofiev, *Sovetskaia Kultura* (March 13, 1990).
6. "Editorial," *Pravda* (March 26, 1990).
7. Aleksandr Davydov, *Izvestiia* (March 27, 1990). The present political situation has been described as one of "dual power: the supreme legislative organ is already operating, democratically elected republic and local soviets have set to work, but real power remains in the hands of the Party-state apparatus just as before." Cf. V. Vyzhutovich, *Izvestiia* (March 24, 1990).
8. Galina Rakitskaia, *Vestnik Akademii Nauk SSSR* (November 1989), p. 47.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thus the need for a modicum of coordination between proliferating reform tendencies has forced Gorbachev to permit the emergence of credible representative institutions and grassroots political organizations.

Party renovators view political liberalization as a means of building new popular constituencies. A practical indication of the reform government's designs for the Informals came shortly after the spring 1989 police riots against ethnic demonstrators, when the press urged the immediate establishment of "trust groups" to bridge a dangerous communications gap between republic officials and an increasingly restive populace.[9] The complexity of *perestroika* is explained by the fact that no major social group or institution can be counted as fully for or against it.[10] This heterogeneity makes coalition-building indispensable in carrying out any reforms, and this, in turn, creates opportunities for the emergence of an autonomous Left. Despite, or perhaps because of, the *apparatchiki's* obstructionism, "qualitatively new subjects — mass self-organizing formations" have arisen during the past three years, which are transforming *perestroika*.[11]

The most influential Informals have their own political agendas, often at odds with the elite's. But the Informals are still seeking to become the Left wing of the *perestroika* coalition since the reform process has escalated beyond the usual feuds between bureaucratic clans to become a "struggle between different conceptions of the development of the country, a struggle of social forces."[12] Gorbachev is thus viewed as a modernizing power broker willing to keep pace with political equilibria driven increasingly to the Left by state reform initiatives.[13] A disoriented Soviet Right is no longer sure where its real interests lie and a nascent Soviet Left is still struggling to find its political compass. According to Stankevich, Gorbachev is mediating between the various sides of the reform coalition to enhance the power of a rationalizing elite seeking to control and direct *perestroika*.[14]

The most detailed proposal for forging a *perestroika* coalition has been made by Andreev, who has urged the Left to take advantage of the

9. V. Vyzhutovich and E. Kondratov, *Izvestiia* (April 20, 1989).
10. Sava Zhivanov, *Kommunist*, No. 17 (1989), p. 106.
11. Rakitskaia, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
12. S. Jarlamov, *El Pais* (July 12, 1988).
13. Galina Rakitskaia, *Voprosy Ekonomiki* (July 1989), p. 39. Stankevich described Gorbachev as a leader who "united in his hands two worlds — the old world passing from the scene and a new world being born." Cf. Sergei Stankevich, *Argumenty i Fakty*, No. 47 (1989).
14. Sergei Stankevich, *Argumenty i Fakty*, No. 21 (1989).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"divergence of objectives between the production-administrative apparatus and a state" now in the hands of reformers concerned with the longterm collective interests of the ruling elite.[15] Andreev has proposed the "unification of working people desiring the full development of socialism into a popular front against bureaucratism." He called for an alliance between the popular front and the Party on a "parity" basis encompassing progressive elites, ordinary Party members, and grassroots insurgents. The Moscow Popular Front echoed Andreev in advocating that the "popular front enter into a bloc with progressive forces in the Party (with reform forces understood to mean not just reformers in the leadership but the millions of ordinary communists who support democratization and the inclusion of all people in self-management)."[16]

Shortly before the June 1988 Party conference, a number of Informals issued a joint statement urging Gorbachev to break with the Right rather than continuing to feign a "semblance of unity."[17] The signatories predicted that sooner or later the General Secretary would be forced to choose between those "who support *perestroika* as a social revolution against the Stalinist legacy" and those "who merely seek a repainting of the façade or technocratic reforms."[18] This social polarization would create a situation where the "developing extra-parliamentary movement can become a strong mainstay not just of the radicals in parliamentary organs but also the reform forces of the leadership in their confrontation with the conservatives." The fate of *perestroika* would then turn on the question of "whether they want to rely on this movement or not." More concretely, the struggles for a rationalizing *perestroika* and a democratic renewal will inevitably overlap. At some point, modernizing elites will find themselves facing the choice: either they reach a *modus vivendi* with the Right and advocate a palliative liberalization, or ally themselves with a popular movement for democratization.

Radical Perspectives on the Market

Contrary to the Western press, not all economists share the infatuation with the market currently prevalent within the Soviet intelligentsia. There

15. Sergei Andreev, *Neva* (January 1989), pp. 154-169.

16. "On Relations with the Democratic Union," *Otkytaia Zona* (August 1988). This is the journal of the Moscow based Informal "Democratic Perestroika," which opens its pages to a wide range of clubs. The document cited is a discussion of the Moscow Popular Front.

17. Cited in *Le Monde* (June 18, 1988).

18. According to Kliamkin, the crisis "will be accompanied by growing tensions and an increasingly rapid influx of new strata of the population into politics." See Igor Kliamkin, *Moskovskie Novosti*, No. 27 (1989).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is considerable weariness with substituting vacuous neo-liberal "incantations" for the old orthodox platitudes.[19] This opposition is predicated on the belief that a structural crisis of the magnitude gripping the Soviet economy cannot be resolved by the Soviet equivalent of Western monetarist nostrums concealed behind appeals for immediate price reform, recapitalization, and the roll-back of the welfare state. These divisions among Soviet economists mirror similar differences within the *perestroika* coalition, as Gorbachev becomes increasingly receptive to experimentation while groping for a way out of the present impasse.

Unlike the established economists' critique of the market, the radical counterpart is both technical and moral. Radical economists challenge anarcho-liberal attempts to invest the market with almost miraculous power- and hierarchy-abolishing properties. The neo-liberal project resurrects the capitalist fiction of the "ideal of equal cooperation" between buyer and seller on the basis of a freely negotiated labor contract.[20]

Thus Sukhotin and Dementiev describe the neo-liberal dream of a rapidly emerging mature entrepreneurial class as a "hope without foundation" in a society which has undergone state-led modernization.[21] Kurashvili similarly underscored that the most likely beneficiaries of the

---

19. Viktor Bogachev, *Voprosy Ekonomiki* (September 1989), p. 58.

20. Buzgalin's and Kolganov's search for a programmatic alternative to neo-liberalism took the form of a sharp critique of Hungarian and Yugoslav market-oriented reforms. Accordingly, a market economy is no less subject than command planning systems to "bureaucratic degeneration" and "techno-managerialist tendencies negatively affecting self-management." Aleksandr Kolganov and Aleksandr Buzgalin, *Sotsialisticheskaia Industriia* (April 9, 1988). A neo-liberal marketization "would inevitably lead to the reproduction of equally serious difficulties in somewhat different forms after 5-7 years of recovery" and culminate in the exchange of one rock of Sisyphus for another. They claimed that neo-liberals were responding to the breakdown of the neo-Stalinist system by embracing the market as a panacea rather than an integral part of a more comprehensive solution. Administrative decentralization and marketization would enable new corporatist structures to resurface within the framework of a decentralized statism which would be equally irrational in its investment choices to placate the institutional egoism of another coterie of vested interests. Cf. Aleksandr Kolganov and Aleksandr Buzgalin, *Sovetskoe Gosudarstvo i Pravo* (August 1987), pp. 53-60.

21. Iurii Sukhotin and V. Dementiev, *Ekonomika i Matematicheskie Metody*, No. 3 (1989), p. 397. The "new entrepreneurs" were reminded that "methods which worked well in the West may be rejected like a transplanted organ, or distorted in another socio-cultural medium." Cf. A. Lipkin, *Otkrytaia Zona* (August 1988). Kagarlitskii has remarked that "it is incomprehensible how 'Russian patriots' intend to create an efficient private sector without a bourgeoisie. Only the mafia or the most corrupt segment of the bureaucracy could serve as capital investors, and neither of these are distinguished in any way by great economic and entrepreneurial skills." Boris Kagarlitskii, *Trudnaia Gegemoniia* (Moscow: unpublished manuscript, 1989). A complete translation is available in *Across Frontiers* (Summer 1989).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

neo-liberal project would be those who have made their fortune in administrative graft or the black market.[22] Proponents of some variant of recapitalization face the same dilemma as pre-revolutionary Russian liberals and Mensheviks: How to engineer a bourgeois revolution in the historical absence of an enterprising bourgeoisie or social strata capable of slipping into that role.

The immediate price reform demanded by neo-liberals as a form of purgative shock-therapy would not only inflict a "painful and senseless blow against the people, especially its poorest strata" but also prove ineffective in dealing with the crisis of disproportionality which is at the bottom of the degenerative growth pattern of the past two decades.[23] Decentralization and enterprise autonomy in a monopoly economy "characterized by the unconstrained *diktat* of the supplier" will lead not to the healthy competition that neo-liberals envisage but to a new crisis of underproduction for cheap staple commodities as managers shift production towards more profitable luxury goods. Neo-liberals concede a major state role in a restructured Soviet economy but they are evasive about its functions. Radicals are more candid in addressing difficulties involved in merging state planning and market relations. But their analysis also betrays a recognition of the need for extensive preliminary experimentation.

Most Informals are weary about the market. In May 1989 the Social Democratic Association claimed: "While acknowledging the role of commodity-monetary relations, democratic socialism is against the transformation of the market and money into the main organizing principle of society which can lead to the concentrated domination of the economy over society."[24] As in similar Western debates about a "third path,"

---

22. Boris Kurashvili, *Sovetskaia Kultura* (December 2, 1989). He cautioned that "the majority of the Soviet people want to cure socialism of its sickness, and are not disposed to watch silently while the social forces spawned by the 'shadow economy' and bureaucratic corruption move towards economic power and, eventually, political power."

23. Iurii Sukhotin, *Ekonomika i Organizatsiia Promyshlennogo Proizvodstva* (July 1989), p. 7. Rakitskii portrayed frequent neo-liberal alarms about imminent economic collapse as an attempt to stampede the government into hasty reforms. See Boris Rakitskii, *Voprosy Ekonomiki* (June 1989), p. 13. According to him, the main cause of Soviet industrial decline is that the "economy operates with a disorganized center" and called for the rationalization of state steering capacity.

24. *O Kurse na Sozdanie Sotsial-Demokraticheskoi Assotsiatsii* (Moscow: unpublished manuscript, 1989). By acknowledging the role of the market in a highly differentiated economy, the authors warned about the inequality inherent in all market systems and the ability of market forces to enable economic elites to circumvent democratic constraints. But the Association emphasized that "efficient production in a modern society is posssible only through a commodity-monetary (market) economy regulated by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Soviet Left is converging on the obscure notion of a mixed economy governed by the regulatory parameters of both democratized planning and a controlled market without adding much new to the controversy.

Some influential liberals have already been drawn towards more qualified assessments of the market by this demystification of the social power and choices embodied in the impersonal logic of commodified exchange relations. Thus they are beginning to acknowledge the negative consequences of the operation of market forces in their propensity towards "bloody crises" and an "anarchic narrowly egoistic foundation for social development which brings humanity into a worsening global internal conflict with nature."[25] But by challenging the market as a new power structure, the Soviet opposition assumes responsibility for developing an alternative organizational principle.[26] Thus, increasingly, neither the plan nor the market is seen as either intrinsically capitalist or socialist. Both are viewed as equally flawed mechanisms of economic mediation which can engender unfair and one-sided power relations.

The Search for an Alternative

Neo-liberals have quickly gone on the offensive against those who sought to "defer economic reforms bound up with the development of the market, and put a special emphasis on democratization."[27] But an

---

society." Politically, the market was perceived as "one of the conditions of the autonomous development of society, the overcoming of state coercion, command-repressive administration, and bureaucratic and ideological manipulation." The Association program sought to find an elusive balance by rejecting both "universal privatization and an excessively state-controlled economy." In such a context, the "Social Democratic alternative embodies a close link between a market economy and a non-market social policy." In fact, the "stability in the economy and society can be secured if the inevitable market selection (and subsequent stratification) is compensated by extra-economic redistribution based on social solidarity and charity." While conceding that a temporary increase of inequality may be the necessary price of breaking up the Brezhnevian system, the Association remains opposed to neo-liberal schemes for the recommodification of universal health, educational, and cultural services (although it envisions limited private ventures in these areas). Rejecting productivism, the economy is no longer treated as an end in itself but as part of a democratic project.

25. Sergei Alekseev, *Izvestiia* (October 23, 1989).

26. "On Relations with the Democratic Union," *op. cit.*

27. Leonid Gordon, *Voprosy Filosofii* (November 1988), p. 53. Iasin has openly mocked the notion of a third path as "beautiful words" which overlook the irreducible imperatives of economic coordination, technical progress, and production quality. See Eugenii Iasin, *Voprosy Ekonomiki* (October 1988), p. 90. Shmelev also questioned the feasibility of a third path, and pointed to the "timely example of Chile of the seventies and eighties" where the Pinochet government deployed neo-liberal economic reforms. Nikolai Shmelev, *Sotsialisticheskaia Industriia* (December 20, 1989). He neglected

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

authoritarian reform may trigger considerable labor resistance and, therefore, require the deployment of state repression. At this time the real danger of a violent outcome to *perestroika* does not come from a possible repetition of a Tiananmen-style backlash by hardline neo-Stalinism since the latter is a spent force. Coercion is more likely to resemble the South Korean Kwangju massacre of 1980 in which modernizing elements of the apparatus and the military, with the support of upwardly mobile segments of the professional-managerial strata, entrepreneurial groups, and a labor aristocracy, combine into an authoritarian bloc ready to defend at any cost a neo-liberal restructuring against a divided Left. A psychological atmosphere conducive to such repression is being prepared by a regional campaign to stigmatize the Informals as dens of "drug addicts" and sexual deviants, and the eagerness of liberal intellectuals to brand all defenders of egalitarianism as "declassé elements, the urban dregs."[28]

It is generally acknowledged that a neo-liberal reform "would inflict the most damage on the living standards of the broad masses."[29] Thus marketizing reforms may reduce the social base of *perestroika* to at most the highest paid third of the labor force, and the resulting widespread popular disaffection could pave the way for the Right to enlist the remaining two-thirds in a revanchist counter-reformation. Many economists anticipate that the XIII Five-Year-Plan (1991-1995) will usher in the first tangible decline of real wages during the postwar period, and the reform government will need labor support to weather these economic dislocations.[30] Clearly, no technocratic reforms will be possible without "popular trust."[31] But if a thoroughgoing democratization preceded economic rationalization, the reform process would yield a "very different array of forces" conducive to the stable unfolding of *perestroika*.[32]

---

to mention that this monetarist shock therapy could have been imposed only by a brutal military dictatorship. But his implication was clearly that democracy was expendable in the persuit of economic modernization.

28. A Novosibirsk party secretary quoted in A. Manokhin, *Sovetskaia Kultura* (December 30, 1989). Aleksei Kiva, *Sovetskaia Kultura* (December 16, 1989). Egorov clearly described this predicament: "Capitalization is impossible without (putting it mildly) the most severe social shocks and civic resistance." Thus it could never be carried out democratically in the Soviet Union. See Vladimir Egorov, *Dialog*, No. 4 (1990), p. 20.

29. Iurii Sukhotin, *Ekonomika i Organizatsiia Promyshlennogo Proizvodstva* (November 1988), pp. 16-17.

30. A. Kormilkin, *Ekonomika i Organizatsiia Promyshlennogo Proizvodstva* (September 1989), p. 153.

31. Boris Rakitskii, *Voprosy Ekonomiki* (June 1989), p. 13.

32. Sukhotin, *Ekonomika*, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The basic premise of the radical economic program is that purely technocratic reforms without democratization would at best result in the Soviet economy becoming "almost as efficient as Western economies."[33] The political evolution of the Informals along similar lines is evident in their defense of workers against the consequences of economic reforms. In its June 1988 program, the Moscow-based Democratic Perestroika Club included a commitment to full employment.[34] Thus Gorbachev was obliged to pursue an "active employment policy" whose rejection of a natural level of unemployment implies a broader commitment to an inclusive conception of democracy that does not pit the beneficiaries of restructuring against the victims.

The unemployment debate is crucial for the final outcome of *perestroika*. Neo-liberal economists argue that "stable state-guaranteed employment is a thing of the past," and these views have strong government support.[35] At issue is not whether unemployment should be permitted but how it will be used in a restructured economy.[36] Instead of unleashing market forces and divisive competition to break up neo-Stalinist corporatist structures, the opposition sought to persuade Gorbachev to seek a renegotiated "social contract" providing labor with a collective material stake in the success of economic reform.[37] Neo-liberals have been using the "de-ideologization" of Soviet economic thought to purge the debate of all political or moral content, and the opposition Left is using full employment to inject it back in.[38]

A Soviet diplomat commented wryly how "Sweden has become the rage" in the *perestroika* debate.[39] While neo-liberals have been singing the praises of Kadarism and Thatcherism, their adversaries use the Swedish model to rebut the contention that only monetarism can recharge a faltering economy. Sweden is seen as an instance where

33. Aleksandr Kolganov and Aleksandr Buzgalin, *Kommunist*, No. 5 (1988) p. 71.

34. "Social Mandate of the Party Conference," *Otkrytaia Zona* (August 1988). The Social Democratic Association platform rejected even more categorically the neo-liberal utilitarianism ethos since a "human being is not a commodity," and human labor cannot be treated as an inanimate resource. See "O Kurse," *op. cit.*

35. A. Goffe, *Sotsialisticheskaia Industriia* (December 28, 1989).

36. Nikitin criticized the maintenance of a certain level of unemployment as a means of "applying pressure on workers." Instead of institutionalizing a classic reserve army of labor, he suggested transforming those put out of work by the inevitable dislocations brought about by the reforms into a "real reserve army of *perestroika*" to be retrained for jobs opening up in a modernizing economy. A. Nikitin, *Pravda* (April 6, 1990).

37. Sergei Stankevich, *Argumenty i Fakty*, No. 47 (1989).

38. Rakitskaia, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

39. Boris Pankin, *Komsomolskaia Pravda* (December 7, 1989).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"full employment and social and economic guarantees of security for working people can become powerful accelerators of efficiency."[40] The Swedish experience is now routinely cited to make the case that countries can maintain economic dynamism with wage differentials even more egalitarian than those of the Soviet Union.[41]

Apart from abstract considerations of social justice, Swedish industrial policy figures prominently in reform discussions because it may offer the Soviet Union the best model as the country phases out obsolete over-capitalized industrial sectors costing the state twenty billion rubles a year in subsidies (or 3% of national income).[42] The Swedish system is viewed as "merciless" towards failing firms whose continued existence would be subsidized by the low wages of a full employment economy in the Soviet Union.[43] But Swedish industrial policy did not lose sight of the welfare of workers affected by these structural shifts in insuring against "individual tragedies." A strong organized labor movement is seen as the key to Swedish economic dynamism since this movement has extensive control over production and distribution, and thereby a stake in efficiency and modernization. The Swedish model addresses the Soviet economic dilemma, which is not growth deceleration but an unbalanced development where resources cannot be easily shifted to a socially optimal production pattern.[44] Brezhnevism preserved full employment by allowing a low-wage economy to subsidize diminishing return sectors and pervasive underemployment. This neo-Stalinist social contract created an objective congruence of interests between conservative sectoral and regional officials, and those segments of labor employed in priority sectors. This political strategy is now exhausted, and it is necessary to undo the old Faustian bargain.

The twin pillars of the Swedish industrial model — full employment and the solidarity wage — would mitigate worker resistance to the liquidation of obsolete enterprises by minimizing the financial pain involved in transferring from a failing branch to an emergent sector. As such, industrial self-management and the establishment of social control over capital formation are not a gift to labor but a means of surmounting

40. Albert Semenov, *Voprosy Ekonomiki* (February 1989), p. 20.

41. Vadim Rogovin, *Sotsialisticheskaia Industriia* (January 31, 1989). Rogovin points out that the wage gap between managers and workers in Sweden averages 2-1 against 3-1 in the Soviet Union.

42. Leonid Abalkin, *Moskovskie Novosti* (February 5, 1989).

43. S. Zhuravlev, *Ekonomika i Organizatsiia Promyshlennogo Proizvodstva* (December 1988), pp. 154-176.

44. Dmitri Lvov et al., *Izvestiia* (May 11, 1989).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the stalemate responsible for the stagflation of the late Brezhnev era. The chronic overaccumulation bias characteristic of the Stalinist growth model was the direct result of a closed administratively brokered planning, and only a sweeping democratization of the investment process could overcome the resistance of corporatist vested interests. The underlying premise of this analysis is that a Taylorist rationalization cannot break through this formidable structural blockage without exorbitant human costs and fierce social conflict.

Some members of the somnolent Soviet trade union hierarchy casting about for a role to play in a restructured economy have also turned to the Swedish model for practical guidance.[45] The Swedish economy remained internationally competitive because its highly skilled and mobile workforce could readily adapt new technologies to domestic needs and foreign markets. The lesson is that the labor movement must concentrate on a longterm strategy of increasing the socialization of the means of production and capital formation. Widespread interest in the industrial strategy of Swedish labor organizations indicates that the more reform-minded segments of the Soviet trade union leadership have at least a vague idea of the importance of economic democracy to their future political clout.

The paramount objective of leftist economic strategy is to develop a variant of *perestroika* which will render conservative *apparatchiki* increasingly redundant by transferring their functions and prerogatives to collective control, and facilitate a shift away from an extensive growth model by socializing the risks across all strata of the population. The opposition to unemployment is predicated on the assumption that immense structural shifts can be most smoothly engineered in a full employment economy predicated on working class participation and solidarity. Here Scandinavian socialism is a feasible counter-model to "Real Socialism." It demystifies neo-Stalinist corporatism and provides an alternative to the *status quo* that does not involve a punishing and divisive marketizing transition to a society in which "two-thirds of the citizens are well off and one-third are outcasts."[46]

---

45. In an interview with a Swedish trade union leader, Soviet journalists paid particular attention to the manner in which Swedish labor organizations rejected the narrow American conception of business or sectoral unionism, and drew their political clout from a defense of community-wide social welfare standards anchored in an unemployment rate of .5%. Soviet commentators were also intrigued by Swedish labor policy which poured 80% of its budget into reskilling and placement, which is the exact opposite of the ratio in most Western capitalist countries. See the interview with S. Malma, in the Soviet trade union newspaper *Trud* (January 15, 1989).

46. Sabov acknowledged that that the Soviet Union is right now a "two-thirds society"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Swedish model also offers a reform strategy that takes advantage of the radical egalitarian value matrix of statist societies rather than seeking to destroy it. The search for a third path will require the exploration of new organizational forms, cooperatives, and combined structures based on social solidarity. The Swedish model may offer a rough outline of a transition strategy needed to extricate the Soviet Union from its profound economic difficulties. But the vast differences between the two countries in size, industrial structure, foreign trade dependency, and ethnic diversity will compel Soviet reformers to develop a model *sui generis*.

Transitional Strategies

Some intellectuals see the political mobilization catalyzed by *perestroika* as a self-limiting *deus absconditus* which will conveniently melt away after clearing a path to power for modernizing elites.[47] A number of progressive intellectuals are dismayed by the fact that the repoliticization of Soviet society has stirred some plebeian reactionary dregs, and have taken to quoting Tocqueville on the dangers of inflaming "ochlocratic passions."[48] The moral is that revolutions and political agendas must be the exclusive province of liberal intellectuals, while the populace remains obedient cannon fodder.

The Soviet intelligentsia has been jaded by the *ouvrierist* cant of the Old Regime, and tends to look upon workers with condescension if not outright hostility. Conservatives seeking to recoup lost ground have been quick to pick up on these tensions. The neo-nationalist United Front of the Working People of Russia is presently campaigning on a promise to return the worker and the work collective to the

---

with 43 million people (15% of its population) living beneath the official poverty line, but quickly added that a "refusal to reconcile ourselves to its inevitability inspires optimism if not hope." See Aleksandr Sabov, *Literaturnaia Gazeta* (April 11, 1990).

47. Three liberal sociologists responded to worker concern about the low representation of workers in the new legislature with the arrogant and revealing remark: "The lord to his domain and the machinist to his machine." Oleg Shkaratan et al., *Izvestiia* (October 25, 1989).

48. Andradik Migranian, *Sovetskaia Kultura* (June 24,1989). Migranian justified his concern about a unruly populism by pointing to the experience of the French and Russian revolutions. In his opinion, the tragic outcome of both upheavals demonstrates that the "interruption of a revolution from above by a mass insurgency of plebeians in support of a social refurbishing for which the necessary prerequisites have not yet matured will end in a sea of blood for the people themselves and the establishment of an even more tyrannical regime than that which existed before the beginning of these revolutionary actions from below." Cf. Andranik Migranian, *Novyi Mir* (July 1989), p. 183.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

political arena from which they have supposedly been excluded by a power-hungry intelligentsia.[49]

Left intellectuals have responded to this reactionary demagoguery by emphasizing that the working class is not a disposable battering ram in the hands of a liberal vanguard, but a strategic ally in the attempt to democratize society.[50] Presently the Soviet Left is teamed with liberals in a tactical alliance to marginalize the hard Right. But they have not softened their criticism of "Westernizers" who wish to import a corporate capitalist model and consolidate the political hegemony of an elite technostructure.[51] According to the radicals, the liberals identify

---

49. One of its parliamentary deputies chided the intellectuals' tendency to view the workers as a "servile weapon in the hands of the administrative-sectoral monster" and banish it to a subservient political role. See A. Ermakov, *Komsomolskaia Pravda* (December 6, 1989). An openly chauvinist trade union official blasted the entire intelligentsia from "academics and lawyers" to "nationalists and Zionists" for filling the heads of striking Siberian miners with subversive propaganda and inciting the escalation of their work stoppage from an economic dispute to political demands. Cited in V. Ukolov, *Sotsialisticheskaia Industriia* (December 6, 1989). A deputy prime minister voiced the Gorbachev government's concern about the "very serious threat posed to *perestroika*" by the attempts of conservative *apparatchiki* and trade union officials to stoke Russian nationalism, and portray themselves as the sole defenders of labor interests. Leonid Abalkin, *Argumenty i Fakty*, No. 41 (1989).

50. Thus Batkin has charged that Migranian and his allies, unnerved by the spontaneous rush of political events, were mutating into Official Liberals estranged from the democratic cause by the fact that the "enraged and democratically unschooled masses have intruded into politics in defense of their own interests." See Leonid Batkin, *Literaturnaia Gazeta* (September 20, 1989). Fadin also criticized the lack of serious historical sensibility in the neo-liberals' failure to acknowledge that European democracies were "ground out" through four or five centuries of revolutions, wars, counter-revolutions, and severe economic crises. See Andrei Fadin, *Vestnik Akademii Nauk SSSR* (October 1989), p. 96. Since Western democracies were the product of a long historical struggle, he drew the conclusion that any attempt to graft these structures on a completely different medium would inevitably produce a "pseudomorphosis" in which analogous institutions would take on a political content entirely different from their original counterparts. Stankevich dismissed the alternative of an authoritarian modernization with the argument that a *perestroika* conducted along these lines "will either degenerate into a slow painful and surrogate elitist reformism, or will begin to provoke chaos and destruction in spite of all plans." See Sergei Stankevich, *Dialog*, No. 2 (1990), p. 51. Batkin has also argued for a more inclusive *perestroika* because reformers were not up against "pure Stalinist totalitarianism" which Migranian invoked to justify an elitist reform, but a "decadent and senile neo-Stalinism, . . . a de-ideologized cynical totalitarianism that lacked confidence and was burdened by a shadow economy etc." (Batkin, *op. cit.*). Levada also concluded that despite the *nomenklatura* conservatives' and populist nationalists' efforts to build a political alliance, the Soviet Right would find it virtually impossible to found a viable party because it was "too heterogeneous and artificially conceived." See Iurii Levada, *Sovetskaia Kultura* (January 20, 1990).

51. A club leader spurned the neo-liberal vision of a "new more enlightened chronically ailing society because society itself must learn to work out the forms of its

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

democracy with the rationalization of relations of domination by abolishing anachronistic Stalinist institutions and establishing a manipulated and degraded public sphere similar to the one obtaining in the West. Liberals and radicals agree that the "*nomenklatura* principle, i.e. assignment and transfer of managerial cadre in accordance with the will of the *upper echelons* of the Party-state hierarchy is the main antidemocratic feature of the command-administrative system of government."[52] But liberals carefully limit their demands to streamlining the *nomenklatura* into a professional political class.[53]

This has also come under sharp attack from the Left. Andreev has developed the most incisive analysis of new power relations in the Soviet Union, and drawn the most radical political conclusions from it. He identifies a "new socio-political class" based on the "production-administrative apparatus," which is second in size only to the working class.[54] Borrowing Milovan Djilas' analysis of the "New Class," which sprang up within an extensive accumulation regime, he pointed out that such a class can survive only within this administrative matrix because a transition to predominantly intensive growth would lead to the radical alteration of social and political relations. Reformers had to face up to the "interpenetration and interdependence of the Party and the New Class," which today vests "real power in the hands of the New Class." The origins of the Soviet economic crisis could be traced to the fact that the administrative apparatus had become independent not just of society but also the executive. As a consequence, the "interests of this class have become the main obstacle to democratic and technical progress." The real danger facing *perestroika* is that the New Class would at some point become sufficiently threatened by the reforms to sweep aside the defenseless progressive elements within the power elite. The grey eminences of this elite would then emerge from the shadows of administrative recesses and special commissions to "become

---

activity." See Oleg Rumiantsev, *Sprawy i Ludzie* (August 4, 1988). Another Informal member wrote "we do not want Soviet society to be transformed along Western lines into a jungle and the site of savage clashes between individuals." See L. Volkov, *Il Manifesto* (14 January, 1989).

52. Anatolii Butenko, *Vlast Naroda posredstvom Naroda* (Moscow: Thought, 1988), pp. 143, 193.

53. Radicals like Butenko, however, will settle for nothing less than the "destruction of the anti-democratic *nomenklatura* system." The existing power structure cannot be reduced to the "tyranny of administrators since it also encompasses the machinery of "mutual interaction of socio-economic interests" throughout Soviet society. See Iurii Sukhotin, *Ekonomika i Organizatsiia Promyshlennogo Proizvodstva* (November 1988), p. 4.

54. Andreev, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-147.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the government." Andreev is convinced that social mobilization is already so strong that a "regime resembling a military dictatorship" would be required to quell it. Despite the risks, Andreev concluded that the Left must be prepared for a "desperate struggle" if it wants to confront the New Class and domesticate the apparatus into a publicly accountable civil service.

Andreev's manifesto rejected an assumption almost taken for granted by Soviet reformers, i. e., that the intelligentsia must become the vanguard of the popular front. The intelligentsia is much too amorphous, and its collective interests far too narrow to qualify it for the role of a social agency able to carry *perestroika* through to democratization without capitulating to self-aggrandizing compromises. In order to realize their objectives, radicals had no choice but to "turn once again to the working class." Of all social groups, the collective interests of the industrial working class corresponded most closely to Andreev's concept of the commonweal because it stood to derive the greatest benefit from a radical democratization and the establishment of constitutional freedoms. Thus, according to Andreev, the "organization of working people" and its collective political capacity will be decisive in determining the pace and ultimate outcome of *perestroika*. This is a major departure in Left debates.

Most Informals anticipated a rapid radicalization of the working class and the imminent emergence of demands for economic democracy.[55] In fact, this politicization is proceeding very unevenly. Thus the Left became more circumspect about the role of the working class in the reform process.[56] Even before the mass strikes of summer 1989, radical journalists were referring to a "moral revolution" among workers stopping work to protest management's refusal to reform autocratic

55. Boris Rakitskii and Galina Rakitskaia, *Vestnik Akademii Nauk SSSR* (September, 1989), p. 53.

56. Karpinskii referred to the "planned manufacture of consciousness" and the stultifying grip of Stalinist "mass culture" on most people. Len Karpinskii, "Why Stalinism has not Left the Stage," in Iurii Afanasiev, ed., *Inogo ne dano* (Moscow: Progress, 1988), pp. 662-663. But some were less prone to pessimism and detected the first stirrings of a critical consciousness and a contesting spirit within an outwardly quiescent working class. The leader of a Moscow Informal agreed with Andreev that the "fate of *perestroika* hinges on the progress of self-organization among the workers." Volkov also believed that most workers remained ambivalent about it and that, as a whole, they still lacked the organizational experience required to constitute themselves as an independent political force. But he saw great promise in the many instances where newly politicized work collectives sought contacts with Informals, and expected these exchanges to bear fruit in time. See L. Volkov *L'Unità* (January 5, 1989).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

administrative structures.[57] These spontaneous job actions provided an "impetus to the development of worker self-consciousness and the establishment of production democracy," as in the case of the Iaroslavl motor works where a partially successful wildcat strike led to the founding of a permanent workers' discussion club to deal with local and national issues along with factory problems.[58]

1989 saw the first wave of strikes involving enterprises of more than 500 workers spilling beyond individual factories to envelop entire branches.[59] Hitherto, strikes were mainly confined to spontaneous work stoppages by individual departments or separate shifts and left no lasting organizational presence. In the spring of 1989 things began to change with the cropping up of the first genuine organs of direct popular power since the early years of Bolshevik rule and the emergence of what is now routinely described as an "autonomous self-organizing labor movement." A nation-wide network of local strike and organizational committees is now operating beside official trade unions, and they presently encompass at least 1.5-2 million workers (2-3% of the work force).[60]

---

57. N. Popkov, *Literaturnaia Gazeta* (December 21, 1988).

58. A. Grigorian, *Trud* (December 6, 1988). Many reformers hope that the introduction of the elective principle into the assignment of cadre and the resulting politicization of the working class will enable the government to "tear apart that process of the reproduction of an insular bureaucratic *nomenklatura*" and provide a much needed counterweight to the "unrestricted one-man management inherited from the thirties." See Mikhail Piskotin, *Sovetskoe Gosudarstvo i Pravo* (January 1988) p. 53. But even at this early stage, there is the danger of a gulf opening up between workers who perceive their political activity as a cultural revolution and intellectuals who view self-management as a convenient anvil on which the Right can be hammered into submission before the advance of a meritocratic third estate. Jadwiga Staniszkis identifies a similar trend as the major cause of the polarization within *Solidarnosc* which sapped its strength and unity through the course of 1981. See her "*Solidarnosc* as a Trade Union and Social Movement" in Witold Morawski, ed., *Democracja i Gospodarka*, Vol. 1 (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 1983), pp. 333-334, 360. These problems eventually let to the disintegration of Solidarity. See Jadwiga Staniszkis, "The Obsolescence of Solidarity" in *Telos* 80 (Summer 1989), pp. 37-50.

59. V. Kabilina et al., *Voprosy Istorii KPSS*, No. 1 (1990), pp. 74-76.

60. Leonid Gordon and Edvard Klopov, *Pravda* (January 18, 1990). Representatives of miners' strike committees walked out of the March 1990 official coal industry union and, in an act reminiscent of the origins of the American CIO in the 1930s, vowed to establish a new independent miners union representing exclusively working miners. See *Izvestiia* (April 1, 1990). Gordon and Klopov advised the government that the Soviet working class had now entered the socio-political arena in earnest, and the political drift of the apparatus and the intelligentsia was "secondary to the course of the labor movement and the entire popular movement." They went on to predict that either the "labor movement will grow into one of the main pillars of *perestroika*" or the reform drive will dissolve into ungovernable chaos. See Leonid Gordon, *Pravda* (January 11, 1990). Wolfgang Leonhard provides a worthwhile reminder that the third

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Radicals categorically reject the neo-liberal notion that economic reform must precede political reform in two discrete stages: "[T]here can only be politico-economic reform, and all must be done together."[61] The radicals' success is registered most tellingly in the conservatives' complaints that "elements of demagoguery have begun to appear in Party organizations," especially among younger members.[62] The Informals' educational work paid off spectacularly in the March 1989 electoral defeat of many notable Party reactionaries, which one conservative loyalist blamed squarely on the agitprop of "our so-called political opponents" organized in unofficial political associations.[63]

Radicals have concentrated their efforts on safeguarding the rights of minorities within the Party, while polarizing the Party into its progressive and conservative wings.[64] Whatever their disparate visions of a

---

generation of industrial workers is now entering the political stage in the Soviet Union, and it was this same generation which helped build the great socialist parties and trade unions of Western Europe towards the end of the last century. Cited in Adam Zwass, *Planwirtschaft im Wandel der Zeit* (Vienna: Europa, 1982), p. 178. Andreev provides historical precedents to speculate that Soviet workers constitute "that force which, having acquired political purpose, will be capable of taking control of the situation" and provide a firm organizational backbone to the vast coalition of social forces needed for *perestroika* to succeed. Andreev, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

61. Iurii Baturin, *Trud* (August 14, 1988). Batkin maintained that political reform in a one-party state should take the form of the construction of "parallel structures" which will eventually become the "social foundation of *perestroika*." Leonid Batkin, "Restoration of History" in Afanasiev, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 171-179. To those urging restraint on the radicals, Batkin replied that progressive politicians needed "leftist opponents whose voices would serve as their conscience," and warned that the slackening of revolutionary impatience . . . would mean the transformation of centrists into the hostages of the Right" as tactical appeasement of establishment conservatives wound down into a "permanent Munich." Batkin pressed instead for an unrelenting war of position which steadily "drove the center to the left" and compelled "those who wished to remain at yesterday's center to establish a new Right."

62. Sergei Bogatko and Iurii Kazmin, *Pravda* (December 12,1988). An article in the main Party theoretical journal reported that "Informal ideologists" command greater political influence among the public in outlying areas than local officialdom, and people go more readily to the organizational representatives of the Informals for advice than their moribund soviets. O. Kuprin and Iu. Uliukaev, *Kommunist*, No. 2 (1989), pp. 60-61.

63. German Diligenskii, *Sovetskaia Kultura* (November 4, 1989). A. Molokov, *Sovetskaia Rossiia* (6 April, 1989).

64. Oleg Rumiantsev, *Otkrytaia Zona* (August 1989). Rumiantsev described this delicate operation as the transformation of the Party from a "corporatist organization governing in the name of the people via a degenerate caste of partocrats into an open socio-political movement" Boris Kurashvili was the first to place on the official reform agenda a "socialist multi-party system — one of the key links of a future developed socialist democracy." B. Kurashvili, *Izvestiia* (November 5, 1988), Interview in *El Pais* (November 28, 1988), *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniia*, No. 5 (1988), p. 11. While agreeable to the establishment of liberal bourgeois parties, Kurashvili was confident that the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

post-Stalinist polity, the Left perceives *perestroika* as a long war of position in which the correlation of forces between democrats and conservatives is gradually shifted in favor of democrats through a cumulative sequence of political ruptures. Practically all Left theorists have been convinced by their own historical experience that the burgeoning political pluralism of a socialist society cannot be contained within the boundaries of a unitary Party-state.[65]

Not all are confident that the repoliticization of Soviet society will be favorable to the Left. Some fear that obsolete counter-productive neo-Stalinist modes of social control will give way to more sophisticated mechanisms of manufacturing consensus.[66] The Left is also responding to the neo-liberal campaign to exalt a compensatory consumerism into the primary measure of the success of *perestroika*.[67] Radical economists

---

"main parties which strive for power and alternate, will be those of a socialist orientation." Kurashvili anticipated that within 10-15 years *perestroika* will have transformed the country into an "authoritarian democratic regime."

65. "About the Course," *op. cit.* The Social Democratic Association has come out in favor of a "gradual transition to a multi-party political system," and declared its intention to eventually constitute itself as an independent party. However, many informal members are in no hurry to establish alternative parties and prefer that their organizations continue operating as "social movements" or "populist movement," which unify and focus the resentments of a broad spectrum of Soviet society against a common adversary. See Sergei Stankevich cited in German Diligenskii, *Pravda* (January 22, 1990).

66. Levada recalled visiting that universal symbol of free expression at the speakers' corner in London's Hyde Park, and noting how all orators, no matter how outrageous or sensible, met with the same blank indifference from both passers-by and the political system as a whole. See Iurii Levada, *Sovetskaia Kultura* (August 27,1988). Here he was reiterating a common observation of critically minded Central European intellectuals on the ephemerality of nominally free individual expression within the numbing cacophony of audio-visual stimuli churned out by remote corporate power centers. Levada ruled out the possibility of a similar outcome for *perestroika* because "ideas still carry weight in our political universe," but he was plainly worried about political liberalization becoming uncoupled from democratization. A few weeks later, in the wake of a major political setback for conservatives, Levada once more raised the possibility that "public discusssion will slide back into a cold Hyde Park where nobody gives a damn about what is said there," a Soviet zone of repressive tolerance where all are free to read Nabokov or Grossman but newly rationalized power cartels remain as impervious to democratization as ever. See Iurii Levada, *Literaturnaia Gazeta* (October 26, 1988). Andreev agreed that the main adversary of *perestroika* is not the *caput mortuum* of Stalinism but the techno-bureaucracy embodied in the "dictatorship of the New Class" and the further penetration of its rationalizing domination into society (Andreev, *op. cit.*, pp. 156, 144). But Andreev disagreed with Levada by stipulating that the reform coalition needs a political strategy simultaneously mobilizing and integrative because "mass activity and democracy would be equivalent to death for the counter-revolution."

67. Rogovin observed how the champions of de-Stalinization have limited themselves to condemning the massive repression of that era while ignoring the "colossal wage spread" which enabled a tenured professor to earn at least thirty-three times the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are thus taking up the cause of working people against neo-liberal proposals for price reform because an increase of the costs of basic consumer goods would only intensify the competition for scarce items at a higher level of spending and serve to maintain the "leading position of those who have the highest income."[68]

The radical critique of inequality goes deeper than the crude economic populism often deployed by the Right.[69] Buzgalin and Kolganov maintained that the "growth of utilitarian consumption is merely a means and not the end" of *perestroika* because the paramount aim of a socialist society must always remain the nurturing of the "inner qualities of the individual."[70]

Underlying this critique of possessive individualism is a recognition of the ecological limits to growth and the need to redirect human endeavor away from compensatory consumerism of the Western type towards the all-round development of human capacities, and a radical

---

salary of a university janitor. See Vadim Rogovin, *Sotsialisticheskaia Industriia* (January 31, 1989). He suggested that many liberal reformers would welcome a return to a "society as stratified as it was under Stalin but without his repression." With respect to his own research on Soviet power relations, Rogovin stated that "many influential circles do not look kindly on attempts to investigate the socio-economic nature of contemporary property and income differentials." The furious neo-liberal dissemination of an "enrich-yourself" ethos was a crude attempt to divert public attention away from these widening disparities in power and wealth.

68. Nikitin and Galvanovskii caution that the paucity of detailed statistics on real income distribution makes it impossible to predict how a sweeping price reform would actually affect low income people. Stable prices on basic commodities have historically been the "main anchor" of the Soviet economy, and severing these moorings without a reliable prognosis of the probable drift could inflict terrible hardship on the most vulnerable segments of the population. See Sergei Nikitin and M. Gelvanovskii, *Sovetskaia Kultura* (March 2, 1989).

69. Rogovin argues that a firm commitment to socialist egalitarianism would go a long way towards assuaging the potentially explosive social tensions engendered by a difficult economic transition if the "people sensed a real turnabout in the assertion of social justice." He warned Gorbachev that a neo-liberal *perestroika* would only deepen the already "staggering socio-economic inequalities which are keenly felt by working people," and at the very least alienate them from the reform drive. See Vadim Rogovin, *Argumenty i Fakty*, No. 3 (1989).

70. Aleksandr Kolganov and Aleksandr Buzgalin, *Sotsialisticheskaia Industriia* (April 9, 1988). They did not disdain the increased availability of mass consumer goods in a grossly distorted economy where personal items like female sanitary napkins are not deemed important enough to be included on the planning roster and the repair of a tractor is tabulated as an increment to production while decent medical treatment for people is begrudged as a non-productive expenditure. But they remained determined that the "aim of socialism should not become the attainment of the living standard of a well-fed philistine (in other words a veneration of the three keys: for the apartment, car and country cottage)." See also Kolganov and Buzgalin, *Sovetskoe Gosudarstvo*, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

alteration of the organization of work and society. The radical conception proceeds from a broader notion of the worker as a stunted *homo faber* denied the chance for creative self-development within an authoritarian and alienating social division of labor rather than a frustrated *homo consumens*. The Left seeks to avail itself of the period of austerity which lies ahead to qualitatively transform the organizational principles of industrial society rather than allow the reduced consumption required for reinvestment to be used to tide the existing authoritarian structures over transient difficulties.

The Informals' political programs are consistently internationalist.[71] In domestic affairs, this internationalism has taken the form of an endorsement of calls to redraft legislation governing the country's federal structure and the right to secession. The Social Democratic Association also made clear its readiness to combat the "ideology and practice of militarism, the ideology of pseudo-revolutionary fanatics" used to remove unchecked defense spending from public scrutiny. With respect to building a socialist society at home, the association declared that the "values of social democracy cannot be realized in one country," and the Soviet Union had to become an "organic and open part of the community of European nations" if it or any of the rest of its neighbors were to translate their socialist ideals into reality.

The neo-liberals' political strategy is predicated on the belief that neo-Stalinism cannot be transcended and the renaissance of society assured without the creation of a propertied class to break the authoritarian state monopoly.[72] Instead of placing their faith in an emergent pluralism of elites or liberal institutional safeguards, radical analysts are looking to a vigorous and independent society to counter the strong tendencies towards alienation and domination typical of every Western society.[73]

---

71. "About the Course," *op. cit.* Thus the Social Democratic Association emphasizes the "urgency of support for national liberation movements at home and abroad."

72. On Soviet neo-liberalism, see Jean-Marie Chauvier, *Le Monde Diplomatique* (October 1989). As a reform-minded Party ideologist pointed out: "Which of us are to be the capitalists and which are to be the hired workers?" See Vladimir Egorov, *Lituraturnaia Gazeta* (October 25, 1989). Egorov believed that the main line of division within the Left ran between those who "believe in the people's creative potential" and those presuming once again to "build a socialism for the people" by reducing its beneficiaries to passive spectators.

73. A position paper of the "Democratic *Perestroika*" club claimed that long dormant problems, especially of an ethnic character, could easily flare up into a political conflagration because Soviet society lacked the "shock-absorbing structures along the lines of various clubs, associations, parties, etc. which are characteristic of a developed society." See *O Probleme Mezhnatsionalnykh Otnoshenii* (Moscow: unpublished Manuscript, 1988)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rather than pouring its efforts into cultivating a propertied bourgeoisie, the Soviet Left has given first priority to reconstituting and strengthening the associative tissue of society. Reminiscent of the *Solidarnosc* insurgency of 1980-1981, the Soviet Left seeks to accomplish this by inventing new ways of giving working people control over all social power structures through an original synthesis of direct and representative democracy in the political sphere as a complement to the new synthesis of plan and market in the economic realm.

Towards a Self-Management Socialism?

The rival wings of the reform coalition both believe that nationalized property will invariably foster a crippling economic fragmentation unless "appropriate counterweights" are set in place to curb these degenerative and invariably authoritarian tendencies.[74] Neo-liberals advocate a far-reaching marketization which will ideally allow competitive exchange relations to generate countervailing forces. The Left, however, looks to the mobilization of participatory work collectives operating within the framework of a self-management socialism as the main institution capable of checking bureaucratic power. If the root cause of the crisis is the lack of democratic accountability, the only effective remedy in a statist economy is the "energizing of the working class," and this can only be brought about through the "transfer of an increasingly greater share of administrative problems into the hands of the workers themselves, the consolidation of the entire plenitude of their rights and obligations in specific realms."[75] The 1987 enterprise legislation accepted in principle this self-management because it approved the extension of the authority of worker enterprise collectives in the production process.

The Soviet Left is just beginning to address the universal problem of enabling individuals to gain control over the large-scale collectivist economy which all those working in advanced industrial societies depend on for their livelihood. Neo-liberals are showcasing individual employee stock ownership as a panacea for the problem of democratizing the economy. But the radicals respond that these much vaunted profit-sharing plans only create the "illusion of participation" for workers in economic affairs, while real control remains lodged in the hands of managerial strata with vastly enhanced prerogatives.[76] In

74. Leonid Abalkin, *Kommunist*, No. 16 (1987), p. 11.
75. Sergei Rogachev, *Sovetskaia Kultura* (December 17, 1987).
76. Rakitskii foresaw employee shareholding schemes providing the perfect ideological

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

keeping with the prevalent neo-liberal productivist ethos, experimental worker brigades have been degraded through unethical and unconstitutional managerial expedients into "convenient instruments of pressure on the workers coming from the hands of their own comrades."[77] Other Leftists accuse enterprise management of molding the "self-management organs in their own image" as compliant rubber stamps which bear a sorry contrast to the vigorous shop floor champions of workers' interests that the Gorbachev enterprise legislation envisaged.[78]

At the center of this controversy is the question of whether the people will be effectively engaged in the "affairs of the administration of production and society."[79] Instead of recommending marketization to

---

blind for direct "exploitation" being introduced *de jure* into the Soviet system because alienated labor power continues to be the primary source of capital accumulation and managerial cadre would preserve their monopoly on distribution. As Nuikin observed, strictly enforced legislation against the exploitation of man by man would mandate the immediate closing of all industrial and agricultural enterprises operating in the Soviet Union for the past half-century. See Andrei Nuikin, *Izvestiia* (March 13, 1990). But in fact, the current debate over the rehabilitation of exploitation or hired labor power has become an oblique means of questioning the distribution of effective administrative power in a restructured economy. See Boris Rakitskii, *Voprosy Ekonomiki* (January 1989), pp. 46-53.

77. Galina Rakitskaia and Boris Rakitskii, *Ekonomika i Organizatsiia Promyshlennogo Proizvodstva* (May 1988), pp. 20-21.

78. See Rakitskii, *Voprosy Ekonomiki* (April 1989), p. 101. According to Rakitsii, the "higher castes" in the administrative structures are taking advantage of market forces to "stir up competition among their subordinates" in the hope of splintering their capacity for collective resistance while remaining bitterly opposed to the prospect of the same spurs being dug into them.

79. Against the reigning techno-decentralizing vision of *perestroika*, Karpinskii urged the Left to push de-Stalinization to its ultimate conclusion in the rehabilitation of the Marxist tenet that the primary measure of socialization is self-management or the extent of the "social disposal of the means of administration." See Karpinskii, *op. cit.*, p. 649. Pletnev polemicized against the proposed use of joblessness as a scourge to greater output by demanding that more effort be put into the "socialization of means of production" through the introduction of polyvalent job rotation which would be aimed at redressing alarming trends towards the circumscription of the individual to the "same profession not just for life but also from generation to generation." See Erik Pletnev, *Pravda* (December 18, 1987). The cause of the present crisis was attributed to the "alienation of the broad mass of workers from the administration of production and all social life." Gerchikov delivered a savage indictment of neo-liberal industrial sociology based on the paternalistic credo that "happy cows yield more milk" with happiness defined as consumeristic satisfaction external to an authoritarian labor process. In contrast to the self-serving sophistries of the human relations school, he claimed that the worker can only gain a sense of being the master of production "through a thoroughgoing democratization of production relations, an active system of enterprise administration, and the real transfer to the enterprise of the functions, rights, and obligations of owners."See Vladimir Gerchikov, *Izvestiia Sibirskogo Otdeleniia Akademii Nauk SSSR* (January 1989) p. 33-37.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

revive a listless economy, Buzgalin and Kolganov advocate the "widest possible democratic procedures in the formulation and ratification of decisions."[80] All restructured economic mechanisms would inevitably "become bureaucratized if the principles of self-management are not implemented."[81] But the Left is using self-management categories to criticize an antiquated concept of state socialism and a hierarchical division of labor. Self-management has become a means of restoring the original radical democratic vision of classical socialism to Soviet political discourse. Radical theorists argue that industrial democracy in a statist system offers the "most effective means of struggle with bureaucratism and the counterposing of state organs against social interests."[82]

Any program of self-management in the Soviet context is vulnerable to being coopted by modernizing segments of the power elite angling to use popular participatory forms as a means of mobilizing the working

80. Kolganov and Buzgalin, *Sovetskoe Gosudarstvo*, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

81. As a remedy to the otherwise inexorable recorporatization of a market socialist economy, the authors prescribe the implementation of the "fundamental principles of self-management" in the economy: "freedom of incorporation and liquidation of the firm; diversity, mobility, and an open character of organizations entering into self-management; the practical participation of working people in organizational activity as an obligatory condition of membership; the granting to each organizational member the right to participate in the resolution of decisions vitally important for the members of the organization; the equality of the various organs of self- management and the absence of a rigid division of labor between them; and the practical education of the working people in administration with the aim of increasing their competence." See also V. Kulikov, *Voprosy Ekonomiki* (May 1989), p. 89.

82. Only by transforming workers into the "subjects of the administration of social production" could they reappropriate the organizational assets which have been usurped by the production-administrative apparatus. Klishen described self-management as the "key" to reining in a hypertrophied state and establishing a system of "material guarantees against the recidivism of the apparatus towards tough administrative methods in dealing with social processes." See A. Klishin, *Sovetskoe Gosudarstvo i Pravo* (October 1988), p. 94. In these circumstances, shop floor democracy is not a luxury but an integral productive force essential to mastering the centrifugal administrative tendencies unleashed by an advanced industrial economy. Torkanovskii was scornful of those neo-liberals who equated self-management with the devolution of authority from managerial bureaucracies to a "specialized administrative apparatus" within the enterprise. See Eugenii Torkanovskii, *Voprosy Ekonomiki* (November 1988), pp. 83-87. Accordingly, meaningful industrial democracy must entail the "implementation of administrative functions by all members of the work collective." This would require a system in which "members of the work collectives themselves establish the objectives of production activity, determine the means of the attainment of these objectives, and establish a consistency of activities and responsibilities for individuals and departments in the fulfillment of the planned reform." There was no other means of promoting "work collectives to equal production partners" and endowing individual workers with the "status of citizen and owner of social property."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

class against establishment rivals and compensating for the inherent limitations and inertias of a command economy. Soviet theorists are aware of the flaws of the Yugoslav model in which industrial democracy became the vehicle for the "fusion of the technocracy with the bureaucratic stratum" *into a "new self-management bureaucracy."*[83] During the Khrushchev era, not even the most ardent advocate of industrial democracy ever dared to suggest that workers should be entrusted with direct control over and responsibility for the disposal of the enterprise surplus. Kulikov has now made that the *sine qua non* of a feasible self-management socialism.[84]

Neo-liberals base their arguments for privatization on the role of property as a successful and economically efficient form of institutionalized power in the West. However, more practical-minded proponents concede that "neither the state of production forces in the country, our social psychology, nor the structure of the system will permit anybody seriously to place on the agenda a broad transition to private property."[85] Comprehensive economic reform must address the problems of steadily redressing power relations skewed in favor of the administration, and realize a generalized social proprietorship over the economy through political modalities other than nationalization. The forging of viable self-management structures would require reformers to strike a balance between the interests of citizens as producer and

83. The Yugoslav self-management experiment was hobbled from the outset by the authoritarian political system required to safeguard the class domination of the various regional oligarchies and institutional power structures. Vasiliev summed up the Yugoslav experience as the failure of the first major attempt to de-Stalinize a statist society by using a council-based decentralization to surmount command planning and an extensive growth logic. The present crisis of Yugoslav statism confirms the judgment of a lost generation of Central European reformers that self-management cannot be limited only to the economy and must be extended to every social sphere as a necessary prerequisite of political and economic development. See S. Vasiliev, *Ekonomika i Organizatsiia Promyshlennogo Proizvodstva* (April 1988), pp. 160-162.

84. Kulikov, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.

85. L. Goldin, *Sovetskaia Kultura* (December 2, 1989). Butenko pointed out the need to devise an alternative to private property as the economic foundation of personal freedom which would "make the individual and the worker independent of the people managing social production" and demarcate the "basic parameters of society under socialism." See Anatolii Butenko, *Pravda* (August 8, 1989). The Social Democratic Association contends that "society should be composed of property owners," but it roundly rejects the exclusionary politics and embedded social inequality of an economy based on private property. See "About the Course," *op. cit.* They called instead for the Gorbachev government to pioneer the "emergence of contemporary forms of collective property run on the principles of economic efficiency, logic, and the inadmissibility of economic subordination."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

consumer, which would prevent the ownership interests of elite strata or individual collectives from achieving undue influence over other socio-economic spheres. The foundation of a self-management economy would be the "solidarity" wage policy which was designed to "secure equal pay for equal work, stimulate the renewal of the production structures, and its rational selection."[86] By forcing the issue of socialization back onto the political agenda, Soviet radicals are coming to grips with the practical difficulties of securing empowerment within the pale of vast oligarchical structures, and the crucial question of how the management of complex organizations can be combined with a democratic vision.

Conclusion

The "informal world" of grassroots fringe organizations has become a laboratory for the development of a new political culture and experimentation with strategies for social change.[87] The political base of the Informals remains unstable, and they still lack a substantive unifying program. But Shevtsova has every right to claim that after the winter 1990 *oblast* revolutions and the recent Supreme Soviet elections, the Informals have achieved a new level of political maturity in constituting themselves as "alternative social movements" with their own autonomous financial and media resources.[88]

All comprehensive reforms like the American New Deal are mainly social processes engineered through trial and error. To survive in this precarious period of economic experimentation, the reform government must have considerable popular support to keep the Right on the defensive. All contenders in the current power struggle realize that

---

86. Opinion polling revealed that more than 70% of those surveyed favor collective forms of property (enterprises rented or owned by worker collectives) against 31% approving the transfer of enterprises into the hands of individual entrepreneurs. See P. Volshchanov, *Komsomolskaia Pravda* (December 12, 1989). There are undeniably broad popular constituencies ready to support the exploration of alternatives to the hired labor dependency which is at the heart of capitalist and statist production relations.

87. Rakitskaia, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

88. Lilitia Shevtsova, *Izvestiia* (February 27, 1990). Levada credited the populism of the Informals with "setting in motion a politically inert mass numbering in the millions," and thereby providing a much needed bridge to the cultivation of a broad democratic consciousness. See Iurii Levada, *Sovetskaia Kultura* (January 20, 1990). The soviet Informals and the labor Left may be still in their infancy but "only the inclusion into the process of the active struggle for democracy of the great mass of workers and youth (which unfortunately has not yet happened) would ensure Soviet society against attempts to turn back the clock and thus also from a bloody civil war." See Andreii Nuikin, *Izvestiia* (March 13, 1990).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the ideological void left by Brezhnevism must be filled before any side can pull together a viable political coalition. Into this vacuum the Right is rushing with ethnic tribalism, authoritarian Slavophile mysticism, and anti-intellectual demagoguery. A reform effort such as *perestroika* inevitably entails a pitched battle for politico-cultural hegemony, which Party renovators could never hope to win on the strength of an "end of ideology" program.[89]

The eagerness of some elements of the reform coalition to stress the socialist credentials of *perestroika* can be traced to the fact that the only other political program with mobilizing potential is nationalism. The Gorbachev administration seeks both to modernize Soviet society and preserve its international position as a great power. Awareness of the threat posed by ethnic Russian chauvinism to these objectives was evident in Gorbachev's resistance to the formation of a Russian Communist Party within the Soviet Communist Party. In reluctantly acquiescing to the establishment of what will certainly become a chauvinist political vehicle, Gorbachev warned that the establishment of a Russian Communist Party should be considered "in the context of the fate of our multi-ethnic state and the fate of the Party as that political force which plays an enormous role in the consolidation and unification of efforts of all social forces within the framework of this multi-ethnic state."[90] The sponsors of a Russian Communist Party were threatening to play the nationalist card to check the erosion of their power base, and Gorbachev was responding that their success could bring on the dismemberment of the Soviet Union. The Gorbachev government thus finds itself in an anomalous situation where nationalism of the old Stalinist or explicitly Russian stripe has become a liability if not a direct threat to its modernizing ambitions, and the explicitly political program of the social democratic variety promises to secure a much broader and stable social base for its reform project.

Shevtsova speculates that the Soviet Union is presently undergoing a fitful evolution towards the emergence of a two-party system over the next decade as rival groupings within the Party steadily draw into their

89. A Gorbachev political advisor rejected neo-liberal demands for the de-ideologization of Soviet society with the argument that "ideology is a necessary and constructive element of social development" in every political system. See Georgii Shkhnajarov, *Kommunist*, No. 4 (1990), pp. 50-51. Iakovlev also took aim at the proclivity among elite reformers to "assume that the outcome of *perestroika* depends solely on the economic situation," and thereby slight political considerations. See Aleksandr Iakoviev, *Kommunist*, No. 4 (1990), p. 19.

90. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Izvestiia TsK KPSS* (March 1990), p. 67.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

orbit substantial segments of the Informals and the autonomous labor movement.[91] The most likely outcome of this momentous realignment within the Soviet power elite and independent social groups would be the gradual consolidation of a political system anchored by modernizing social democratic and neo-liberal parties.[92] The obvious attraction of a two-party system for all segments of the Soviet power elite lies in the ability of a first-past-the post electoral law to marginalize minority opinions and generate centripetal tendencies needed to countervail the centrifugal forces set in motion by reform. This long-range strategy would require Gorbachev to negotiate a new social contract with the new political forces — especially labor. Gorbachev has on numerous occasions voiced his desire for an "alliance . . . of central authorities and the working class," and welcomed the advent of diffuse "social movements."[93] His political vehicle to engineer this transition from a one-party monopoly regime to a post-Stalinist polity is a French-style executive presidency insulated from partisan party pressures and departmental logrolling which paralyzed the Third and Fourth Republics.[94]

91. Shevtsova, *op. cit.*
92. M. Pavlova-Silvanskaia, *Literaturnaia Gazeta* (March 21, 1990).
93. M. Gorbachev, *Pravda* (February 5, 1990).
94. Evgenii Ambartsumov, *Literaturnaia Gazeta* (December 27, 1989).

the philosophical forum
A QUARTERLY
VOLUME XXI:1-2 $8.50
Fall-Winter 1989-90

HERMENEUTICS IN ETHICS AND SOCIAL THEORY
A SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

Jürgen Habermas
Michael Walzer
Agnes Heller
Thomas McCarthy
Seyla Benhabib
Albrecht Wellmer
and others

Editor: Marx Wartofsky
Guest Co-Editor: Michael Kelly

SUBSCRIPTIONS
$15 per year for individuals
$45 per year for institutions
+ $4 for foreign subscriptions

Other special issues:
Latin American Philosophy
Fichte
Apartheid

the philosophical forum
P.O. Box 239
Baruch College of CUNY
17 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10010

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Authoritarian Perestroika *Debate**

Ewa Bérard-Zarzicka

The breakup of Communist regimes continues at a steady pace. It has been ratified by the parliaments of Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and placed at the top of the agenda by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Political liberties are the only question of the day, and the Western press has been quick to herald the advent of democracy. The economic order has not, of course, followed suit: the decline of production, the drop in standards of living, the wearing down of an already exhausted population, all bear witness to this fact. Official Soviet speeches and the press deal openly with these problems. However, they do so without linking them to the question of liberties. There are very few who dare to spoil the festive mood by exposing the nature of the transformations that await the countries of "real socialism." That is why Kliamkin's and Migranian's work is so important.

Igor Kliamkin first came to public attention with the publication of two lengthy articles dealing with the place of Stalinism in Russian history and its surviving strains in contemporary Soviet society.[1] A self-styled political scientist, Andranik Migranian has written several articles dealing with the functioning of political parties. Last summer, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* published a joint interview with Kliamkin and Migranian under the provocative title: "Do We Need an Iron Hand?"[2]

---

* Originally published as "Quelques propositions pour une perestroïka autoritaire," in *Les Temps Modernes*, Vol. 45, No. 523 (February 1990), pp. 11-22. Translated by Russell Moore.

1. Igor Kliamkin, "Which Road Leads to the Temple?" in *Novy Mir*, No. 11 (1987); and "Why is it Difficult to Tell the Truth?" in *Novy Mir*, No. 2 (1989).

2. Igor Kliamkin, Andranik Migranian and G. Tselms, "Do We Need an Iron Hand?" in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, No. 33 (August 16, 1989). Kliamkin subsequently objected to the title of the interview, which was the work of the editorial office.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

These ideas have stirred considerable debates which are far from over.

In the mind of its authors, *perestroika* implies a double reform: the transition from a state-run to a market economy, and the passage from totalitarianism to democracy. But can these two processes occur simultaneously? There are no historical precedents. According to Kliamkin, the creation of national markets, whether in 17th century monarchic Europe, in Spain or Portugal at the beginning of the 20th, or even in contemporary Latin America has always been accompanied by the installation of an authoritarian power charged with protecting the new economic forces. Nothing indicates that Soviet society can escape this fate. Migranian argues along similar lines: "The world experience of modernization from above teaches us that the forces seeking to revolutionize the social system must have at their disposal considerable power in order to be able to make radical decisions at the top and to demand, in an equally resolute manner, that those decisions be carried out. During the transitional stage, the authoritarian power is constructive to the extent that it imposes itself on reactionary forces. Very likely, this would be an "enlightened authoritarian power" that will be able to create the premises necessary for the passage to fundamental democracy in our country."[3]

If the two authors stress analogies in world history, and if they warn against repeating the error of believing that Russia could follow its own particular road to development, bypass an entire historical stage and thereby escape the laws of modernization, they also insist on the unique situation of the USSR and the lasting deformations wrought by Stalinism. Moreover, they indicate that the transition to a market economy under conditions of "real socialism" promises to be particularly complex. For this transition must be carried out, not within a context characterized by private property and established "interests of the producers," but within a context of state ownership in which the "producers' interests" are nonexistent (as the private sector is insignificant). It is not even possible to compare the situation of the Soviet Union to that of other countries of "real socialism" (Poland, Hungary or China): "In undertaking the evolution towards a market economy, we are starting from zero," writes Kliamkin. Migranian goes further by adding, that, according to the degree of the individual's submission to the state and the disappearance of civil society, the Soviet system has acquired a "monstrous" form "unknown in history."

---

3. Andranik Migranian, "The Long Road to the European Home," in *Novy Mir*, No. 7 (1989).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What does the end of totalitarianism mean?" asks Migranian. The state relinquishes its monopoly in the economic and intellectual sphere, thus allowing new forms of property and ideology to emerge. What follows is a sudden, abrupt diversification and polarization of society that, in the absence of institutions and rules governing political behavior, risk plunging the country into chaos, even into civil war. It is therefore imperative that the economic and ideological upheavals occur under conditions of political stability. Such stability can only be guaranteed by a strong, centralized power. By acting within the context of a conceded democracy, authoritarian power protects new forms of ownership, favors the modernization of the economy and mediates social conflicts. But in allowing different social groups and interests to form, it contributes at the same time to the constitution of civil society. For this reason, unlike totalitarian powers, authoritarian regimes have been able to evolve towards democracy. Spain, Portugal, Greece (sometimes Migranian extends his list to include Argentina, Brazil, South Korea . . . !) are examples of such an evolution. Kliamkin defines the difference between the two types of regimes this way: "Whatever their repressive nature, authoritarian regimes, unlike the Stalinist type of totalitarianism, have not only never directly interfered in the economic sphere, they have also contributed to the liberation of the economic sector from the state's dictates and to the protection of private property by means of legal guarantees. One has only to think of the famous 'Napoleonic Code' in order to understand the fundamental difference that separates Stalinism from authoritarian power."

Who in the USSR can fill the role of the "enlightened authoritarian power"? For Migranian, the answer is clear: it is up to the Communist Party to assume this role. "It is the leadership of the Party that launched *perestroika*, and currently, the Party is the only force capable of directing this process . . . . During the transition to democratic rule, the Party must safeguard its role as the guarantor of the stability of the political system." He adds two important qualifications. First, it is up to the Party to carry out satisfactorily the separation of powers — "the power of the Party, the legislative power and the executive power" — and to promote the formation of political institutions endowed with all the needed legitimacy. The current arrangement for the sharing of power between the Party and the Soviets is not set up to "ensure the dynamics of the political system" — at least to the extent that the *nomenklatura* system remains intact, i.e., the right of the Party to appoint and dismiss cadres belonging to both sets of governing machinery. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Party must retain, as its unique prerogative, the role of "formulating the political program for the development of the country." But how does one go about ensuring that this program will be respected by the independent executive and legislative powers? It is at this point that Migranian offers his second suggestion: such an authoritarian power has already been in existence in the USSR for thirty years. But this authoritarian power was weak, for "collective leadership is the source of stagnation." Now modernization and economic reform require "a power that is strongly personified . . . at the top of the pyramid of the *nomenklatura*." The legitimacy of the "leader" must rest on his traditional base, the organization that formed him, and on the support of the masses (Migranian deliberately uses the foreign term "leader," which he clearly prefers to the Russian word "*vozhd*" — guide. The latter term, it is true, evokes too much the image of Stalin).

Divergences between Kliamkin and Migranian appear in evaluating the current situation, especially the results of the Congress of the People's Deputies. Convened last June, this first national assembly, elected in partially free elections, approved the single candidacy of Gorbachev and elected him to the presidency. Gorbachev thus came to occupy the country's two highest offices. As Kliamkin notes, since Gorbachev's election and especially after the expulsion in September of the conservatives from the Politburo, "the question of knowing whether it is necessary to invest Gorbachev with more power is no longer relevant: he has 'all' the power. We are now in an authoritarian regime, albeit an extremely unstable one." Under these conditions, what must the respective roles of the Party apparatus, the Congress and the democratic opposition be?

Migranian opts for the legitimation of the "temporary dictator" (in an August 1989 interview, the term "dictator" replaced the word "leader")[4] by the Party apparatus, which remains the guarantee for the stability of the changes (he cites, as examples, two socialist "modernizers," János Kadar and Deng Xaioping). From this viewpoint, the convening of the Congress was a mistake: it could only foster democratic illusions ("All power to the Soviets"), while the Supreme Soviet is incapable of assuming power. This is not only due to the opposition by the Party machinery; it is especially due to the nonexistence of a civil society, economic interest groups and their institutions. "Many deputies have naively demanded: 'Mikhail Sergeievich, give up your position as First Secretary, and be 'a child of *perestroika*'!" If their appeal

4. Kliamkin, Migranian, and Tselms, *op. cit.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had been heeded, it could have proved fatal for Gorbachev as well as for *perestroika*. Instead of strengthening his power, the leader-reformer would have lost it completely. According to Migranian, the only reasonable solution — although unrealizable in the present climate — would have been to invest Gorbachev with exceptional powers and to entrust him with the formation of a Committee of National Security.

Likewise, Kliamkin maintains that the initiative for reforms in the USSR has come from part of the Party apparatus fighting for its own survival. The history of the countries of "real socialism" proves that the Party machinery "can allow economic liberties in peripheral sectors, but its reforms lead inevitably to the break up of the regime and the loss of control. Today, the apparatus has become an atomized mass, bereft of any economic base. It is no longer able to guarantee the legitimacy that its chief reformer needs. Thus Gorbachev has sought this necessary legitimacy by going over the head of the Party apparatus to the elected national body." Unlike Migranian, Kliamkin sees there the positive meaning of the Congress of Deputies. But, he adds, "the limits of the Party's reform action are determined by its social base: the industrial proletariat." A Party which for seventy years has been the dogmatic defender of a collectivist, centralist and egalitarian ideology will have a difficult time in proposing to the working class an ideology founded on the values of the individual, private property and social inequality. The fundamental problem is not the Party apparatus, but the socialist working class whose main concern is equality. This class sees reform only as another means for achieving social justice. This can be readily seen in the striking miners: they are seeking the modernization of management and social justice without seeing anything incompatible in those two demands. The dismantling of old political structures that prevent the changes is necessary, "not for developing democracy, but for strengthening the power of the leader-reformer." Democracy, as it has just made its appearance in the USSR in the form of the Supreme Soviet, is only economically speaking a "democracy of consumers" — one by its very nature unaccustomed, if not downright hostile to reforms. "Assuming that our leader proposes the introduction of the market, can he do so while relying on the masses for support? Certainly not! Our population would be 80% against it. The market means differentiation of incomes and interests. One has to work a lot just to earn one's living."

As for Migranian, he is hostile to this "democratic" road to authoritarianism. According to him, Gorbachev has placed himself in the position

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of both "Luther and the Pope. On the one hand, he has thrown down the gauntlet to the *nomenklatura* . . . [;] on the other, he continues to embody them in the eyes of the population." He bears responsibility for the weakness of the two apparatuses: he has succeeded neither in invigorating the Party nor in stimulating the creation of mass organizations able to function as driving forces for his policies. *Perestroika* has shaken Soviet society, but it has not made it advance. Conflicts and contradictions are still played out behind the curtain of the ideology of unanimity. The former structures and ideologies no longer function, and new ones do not yet exist. No system, warns Migranian, is capable of holding on for long in such a state of "suspension." To delay the establishment of a strong power runs the risk of leading the country to the brink of catastrophe: either a return to the past, "with its temptation to resolve the accumulated contradictions by the use of force," or "the polarization and radicalization of the masses . . . a social cataclysm with unforeseeable consequences . . . a fall into the abyss."

Kliamkin questions this specter of the "unleashed masses." He speaks about a relative achievement of bourgeois respectability by workers and *kolkhozniks* who, today, have "something more to lose than their chains," and of the maturity of the miners, during the summer strikes, who "preferred peace to war." Nevertheless, he is closer to Migranian in his fear of the possible exploitation of egalitarian demands. If the democratic opposition is hesitant about launching a radical program (first of all, with respect to peasants), it is because the opposition is afraid of provoking a popular movement that "in essence, would be much less democratic than anti-bureaucratic. For it is the slogan of the anti-bureaucratic struggle, which holds the masses together today. They are not concerned with democracy understood as a system for the sharing of powers and as an economic institutions." It is for this reason, notes Kliamkin, that populist leaders such as Boris Yeltsin avoid any allusion in their programs to the problems of a market economy (Kliamkin goes so far as to envision the possibility of a situation in which Gorbachev, faced with particularly unpopular decisions, would have to use Yeltsin). More suspicious of the masses, Migranian characterizes Yeltsin as a "neo-Bolshevik leader" who promises "to return to the people what was stolen from them." "If the situation continues to deteriorate, we are going to see an increase in the number of 'good people' ready to support any leader who will have promised them simple, swift and practical actions under the slogan of social justice. Such leaders are incapable of modernizing the system, but they can ruin it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The two authors have reservations about the danger of conservative forces. For Migranian, a possible conservative resurgence is less serious than the rise of the democrats. In the first case, the danger is one of a few years of stagnation; whereas in the second, what is at stake is a weakening of Gorbachev's power and the door being left open to unchecked forces. Kliamkin rules out a Stalinist type of dictatorship: a closed economy based on slave labor can no longer respond to the challenges of a computerized world. Though he does not believe in the immediate danger of an offensive by the conservatives (because they lack both a leader and an alternative program), Kliamkin, however, focuses on the elaboration of a new language, of new ideological symbols destined to restore "monolithic unity" around the Party. "The State, the Motherland, Communism!," such is the banner uniting the enemies of change. It is also a reminder, that the "virus of totalitarianism" continues to eat away at the social body. The "Nina Andreevna syndrome," named after the famous Stalinist advocate, extends well beyond the Party apparatus. And it is also for this reason that "it is impossible to go from Stalinism to civilization in a single leap."

Kliamkin has warned about the fact that *perestroika* is not irreversible as long as a state of law does not exist in the USSR.[5] As long as the legal code establishes the "leadership role" of the Party and authorizes it to direct and check state authorities without requiring any accountability by the Party; as long as, in short, "the administrative system flourishes, there are no perspectives for radical reforms." Today, when one calls his attention to the fact that the Gorbachev version of authoritarian power is far from leading the way to a state of law, Kliamkin answers that the real problem is not "a question of the Constitution, but of the forces capable of sharing political responsibility with Gorbachev. One must begin to cultivate a multi-party system."[6] Informal movements of various allegiances are ephemeral and do not have, for the moment, any social base. Even in their democratic sectors, the masses remain unorganized. For this reason, the responsibility of the "democratic minority" in the Congress, the famous "interregional" group that was formed last July, is all the greater. Kliamkin considers "the radicals' timidity unfortunate," as they have shown themselves unable to take charge of their own demands (in the same way, they abandoned the idea of presenting their own candidate in the election for the presidency

5. Igor Kliamkin, "A New Type of Relationship Between Economics, Politics and Ideology," in *Vestnik Akademii Nauk SSSR*, No. 6 (1989).

6. Igor Kliamkin, personal interview, Moscow, (October 9, 1989).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the Supreme Soviet, while denouncing the single, uncontested candidacy of Gorbachev). The imposing task for the democrats does not consist "in verifying constantly to what extent the process underway respects democratic norms," or "in sacrificing their identity in support of the reformer authoritarian power," but "in maintaining a political dialogue with the power in order to bring it to the point of realizing the maximum of its reform potentialities." Thus the interregional group should maintain a certain distance with respect to Gorbachev and become politically autonomous (i.e., become an "opposition"). Moreover, Kliamkin stresses that the more or less repressive nature of the authoritarian regime depends directly on the maturity of the Left.

Likewise, Migranian deplores the lack of autonomy among democratic forces. His main preoccupation remains, however, the reinforcement of central authority. "Today, the fate of *perestroika* and the success of modernization depend essentially on our ability to overcome quickly the anemia of the supreme power, to create consensus around central authority, and to strengthen the political will of the center, in such a way that it can clearly articulate the political initiative and impose subsequent reforms in all areas." In this sense, Migranian does not hesitate to decide in favor of a "dictator." As for Kliamkin, he does not easily abandon the dilemma posed by the divergence between his analyses and his convictions as a democrat. "I do not want to support just any dictator, even if he works in favor of democracy. I wish to preserve my right to defend democratic ideas. But Left criticism is not futile: it will push the leader towards more radical steps. The existence of a Right and a Left will widen his margin to maneuver."

Kliamkin's and Migranian's positions have generated considerable indignation on the part of democrats. But they have also triggered comparable reflections leading to similar conclusions. Consider one of them, which is important as much for its content as for the personality of its author: Sergei Alekseev, director of the Institute of Philosophy and Law of the Ural Academy of Sciences and chairman of the Legislative Commission of the Supreme Soviet. Alekseev points out that political reforms simultaneously aimed at democratization, the weakening of the bureaucracy and the creation of a state of law have taken precedence over other reforms and notably *perestroika*. "We have stopped at the level of political reform, and we have let ourselves be carried along to the point that the political process has become an end in itself. If one adds to this the national movements and conflicts, one may say

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that the consequences are dramatically negative ones, particularly in the struggle for power."[7] What are these negative consequences?

In the USSR today it is widely believed that the loss of the state's hold on the monopoly of violence — as a result of the disintegration of the totalitarian state — has created a situation of "decentralized violence," in which henceforth any and everyone assumes the right to exercise force. According to Alekseev, "The democratization of our country has created the conditions for a genuine explosion of negative phenomena . . . notably with respect to the cult of violence." Moreover, Alekseev recalls that fascism also sprang from democracy. He points out that it is false to believe, "that the development of democratic forms will automatically lead to the disappearance of the bureaucratic apparatus." He even suggests that the "democrats," to the extent that they have diverted attention away from the fundamental problems for the survival of the apparatus, i.e., those concerning the reform of the state-run economy, are playing the bureaucracy's game.

According to Alekseev: "The key to success is to be found in the economy . . . . At the present stage we need, before anything else, to create an efficient and dynamic socialist market economy. In this area, we must bring about a rapid and resolute breakthrough, so that we will not let ourselves, among other things, be eliminated by the 'democracy of force' and the unchecked violence of destructive processes." Like Kliamkin, Alekseev emphasizes that up to now the process of democratization from the side of suppliers has had only one result: the strengthening of "consumers' demands, corporative egoism, without the stimulation of the efforts to produce." In his opinion, only a "strong authoritarian power" would be able to break down bureaucratic resistance and impose a market economy. The "high degree of authoritarianism" recommended by Alekseev would have to be embodied by two institutions: presidential power and a system of legal institutions. He concludes by saying "we need a power which, even though based on democratic institutions and laws, would be completely directed towards the execution of the law and which, for that very reason, would be a hard, inflexible and, if necessary, brutal power."

Kliamkin's and Migranian's theses are not without weaknesses. Their conception of East European reforms and their vision of the history of Western capitalism are not always convincing. It is not clear how the

7. Sergei Alekseev, "The Force of Democracy and the Democracy of Force," *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, No. 40 (October 4, 1989).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"temporary dictator" would cease being a dictator and the new apparatus would abandon its power to the benefit of democracy. One may be surprised that the authors allude to so many examples from Western history without ever referring to the problems raised by the industrialization of Russia itself, either at the end of the 19th century or during the 1920s. They explain at great length the advantages of authoritarian power, but seem to minimize its inconveniences. One may wonder, for example, how they conceive of a strong Left opposition under a regime that they themselves consider repressive. But interest in these two intellectuals lies in the fact that they have undertaken a deeper, more careful study of the problems raised by the decomposition of the totalitarian regime. Can revolutionary changes be accomplished through *democratic* processes? If they are careful to dismiss any apocalyptic vision, they nevertheless warn against any dazzling rose-colored view about the future of *perestroika*.

THEORY CULTURE & SOCIETY
Explorations in Critical Social Science

Published by SAGE

Editor
Mike Featherstone
Teesside Polytechnic, UK

Theory Culture & Society was launched to cater for the resurgence of interest in culture within contemporary social science. The journal provides a forum for articles which theorize the relationship between culture and society. *TCS* is concerned to build upon the heritage of the classic founders of social theory and examine the ways in which this tradition has been reshaped by a new generation of theorists.

Theory, Culture & Society is published quarterly in February, May, August and November

Subscription Rates, 1990

	Institutional	Individual
One Year	£ 55	£23
Two Years	£110	£46
Single Issue	£ 15	£ 7

SAGE Publications Ltd, 28 Banner Street, London EC1Y 8QE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An Authoritarian Perestroika? *A Roundtable**

For the USSR Authoritarianism is a Dream

Andranik Migranian

If Marx is to be believed, we are ahead of the whole world with respect to social formation. However, from the viewpoint of the nature of the regime, we trail everyone. Any normal Latin American regime operates on the basis of market relations. In this sense, the USSR is qualitatively different from them. The basic idea of authoritarianism is the implementation of de-statization. With the demolition of traditional structures, new ones are created. Conflicting centers arise on the foundation of new values and, as a rule, the new structures are not able to reconcile conflicting interests. There is no mechanism, no consensus concerning basic values among the groups drawn into socio-political affairs.

I view the classic role of authoritarianism in the following way: to do everything necessary for the gradual inclusion of all anti-systemic forces in an organic interaction within the framework of civil society — under the auspices of a strong regime. We must realize today that, on the level of a political system and a political regime, we lag far behind Latin America, South Korea, and other new industrial countries. In the entire millennium of Russian history, we have behind us only a few months of feeble and inefficient democracy. I say this to make the point once again that, while journalists may be permitted the liberty, scholars cannot be forgiven for failing to distinguish between totalitarianism and authoritarianism and failing, as a consequence, to recognize the boundaries we are setting out from in undertaking *perestroika*.

---

* This is part of a roundtable held recently in Moscow. It originally appeared in *Latinskaia Amerika*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1990). Translated by Patrick Flaherty.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Although it would seem that all have read the texts where the differences are pointed out, they prefer to act as though they do not see these differences. Even scholars repeat what appears in official texts: We had an authoritarian style and authoritarian methods. This is enough for them to believe that we are apparently moving from authoritarianism to democracy. But we do not have authoritarianism. We never had it. Under authoritarianism, our economy, as well as our social and cultural spheres should be de-statized. No petty authoritarianism in Latin America, Africa, or any other place, ploughs, sows, plants, checks repertoires etc. Authoritarianism is a dream for us. This is why I am shocked when critics say that we have gone beyond authoritarianism. This merely reflects an unwillingness to read the text carefully. My article, published in the journal *Novy Mir*, "spelled out" quite precisely the notions of totalitarianism and authoritarianism, and showed where we are starting from. When we have a free economy and free culture, when ideology does not play the role it still plays for us, when we have other values shared by most if not all, and a strong regime remains only in the political sphere, then we can say we have authoritarianism. We are still far from this. All this still appears a dream to me.

History has never witnessed the sucessful completion of a peaceful transition from totalitarianism to authoritarianism. Never. This is the first experiment. We find ourselves in a completely different dimension. I am speaking about Latin America, not because these countries have the same type of regime we do. The plain fact is that in both Southern Europe and South Korea a transition from authoritarianism to democracy has been worked out — not just theoretically. In varying degrees, these countries have made a practical transition to democracy. This transition is neither automatic nor irreversible. As the historical experience of these countries demonstrates, regression is possible. Democracy is the conflict of institutionally structured interests. But at the root of a democratically operating society lies a consensus between the main actors in the political and social process. A weak democracy is thus constantly subjected to the disruption of this consensus when society falls into crisis. Values not deeply internalized fail to prevent intense conflicts of interest. An institutional mechanism not sufficiently consolidated cannot cope with these conflicts. This explains why the emerging democracies in Argentina, Brazil and several other Latin American countries will remain vulnerable for some time, and during crises are subject to the lure of authoritarianism. We are in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an even worse situation than Latin American countries. They have property free of state control, a well developed market, and the rudiments of a civil society. But in the fifth year of *perestroika* we still cannot openly admit that our aim is to establish a normal market, normal market relations, the recognition of private property on a par with other forms, and many other things. When we play games and talk about all sorts of incomprehensible things like a socialist market, socialist pluralism and socialist this and that, it becomes obvious that between us and democracy lies a gulf incomparably greater than that confronting Latin American countries. The euphoria of our "democrats" and their appeals for an immediate transition to democracy seem to me simply absurd. Our society lacks structures as well as mechanisms for coordinating interests. Without these, there will be no consensus. What kind of democracy can there be without consensus? We can, of course, establish soviets at every level and transfer power to them. But we know the experience of Africa. Any analysis of the "Third World" shows that the formulation and ratification of a democratic constitution is not sufficient to consolidate democracy and transfer power to any representative organs. They will be immediately transformed in accordance with the established structures in society: economic, social and political. I do not employ Marxism much in the analysis of political regimes, but in this case I am much more a Marxist than our "democrats" because I cannot ignore concrete reality, and believe that we cannot cross over to democracy without the entire infrastructure required for such a transition.

Yet, in one respect, the parallels drawn between our regime and traditional regimes making a transition to industrialization with the dismantling of established social ties are very important and well founded. Both totalitarian and traditional regimes are one-dimensional and limited. In traditional societies, all forms of vital activity are regimented by tradition, customs and religious prescriptions. Under a totalitarian regime, all forms of vital activity are also prescribed by an abstract and impersonally rational scheme. Just as traditional societies undergo a transition from routine and prescription to spontaneity and conflict during the shift to capitalism and the market, so too will a return to diversity, spontaneity and conflict take place during the transition from the totalitarian form of one-dimensionality to the market. As already indicated, the absence of consensus and of a mechanism for conflict resolution will lead to the emergence of both in the political sphere during the transition to an authoritarian regime. In this regard,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a comparative analysis of the modernization of traditional societies and totalitarian regimes is justified and instructive.

I would like to stress the internal organic connection between authoritarianism and democracy, and once more stress that there is no qualitative gap between them. Why? Because both have a civil society. In democracies, civil society exists in a pure form, and governs itself. Under an authoritarian regime, civil society exists in an immature and conflictual form which still needs some power center to restrain passions raging within it. A qualitative gap, a chasm, lies between totalitarianism and authoritarianism. We must bridge this chasm, but nobody has done it yet. This is why I want to say a couple of words about China. China most closely resembles us: a traditional society also attempting to modernize within a context of socialism, an enormous bureaucracy, apparatus etc. Even during the initial stage, China was able to carry through certain shifts in the economic sphere in free zones, etc. But this would have been completely impossible if the "founding father" of this reform did not hold the highest political office. Undisputed, conceptually thinking, and vested with complete authority, such an individual was Deng Xiaoping. Surrounding him was his team, which subordinated itself to and translated his will into reality. They frequently ask: Where is the guarantee that the power of such a leader will not become tyrannical? Of course, there are no such guarantees. When at the Moscow Tribune I stated that the Congress can grant the President emergency powers to dissolve all organs of authority, etc., this caused a storm of indignation on the part of our liberal intelligentsia. But I went on to say the following. If the present chaos continues, another dictator will come, but this one will not have a popular mandate or any obligations to the people. He will be a dictator whom we do not know and who has not committed himself to the ideas of modernization and movement towards some vaguely defined but at least progressive objectives. This dictator will not be answerable for anything to Congress or anybody else. Relying for support on the power structure, the *nomenklatura*, and the people who have become tired, disillusioned, and sick of it all, who have seen nothing besides an intensification of the crisis, he will only meet applause in the situation taking shape. It seems to me, although I may be mistaken, and I hope I am, that the main drama of *perestroika* will be played out in the coming months. Either it will be that variant which I suggested and we go forward out of this unstable equilibrium, i.e., forward under the aegis of a strong regime which will establish all the necessary structures for the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

transition to democracy. Or we will go backwards and then enter a period of very protracted convulsions which in my view will have unpredictable consequences. But, I repeat, it will be much worse if this crisis continues. What I have put forward in this instance is an attempt to offer a theoretical solution. But, of course, I cannot guarantee how it will all work out in practice. Nobody could provide such a guarantee.

K. Maidanik: What sense does it make to concentrate power in the hands of one individual? Can this regime, like Baron Munchausen, pull itself up by its own bootstraps? Or, like any other regime, must it rely on force? This force can be the army, perhaps the apparatus, or some segment of the masses.

Migranian: Exactly. Strictly speaking, what is preventing the broadening of the social base of *perestroika* and democracy from below? The fact that there is no political will at the center which can make radical decisions. That is the obstacle. Precisely this sort of strong regime is needed to broaden the base from below. What did the Chinese do? Very simple: with one decision, practically half the country and more was transformed into supporters of reform. A single decision to give land to the peasants created a fantastic social base for reform. This is why a strong authority is needed at the center. Many believe I am proposing a strong regime so that we might once again be ruled by some neo-Stalin. However, at the present stage, a strong authority at the center must introduce at least three very important laws. The first concerns freedom of the press, because we need a media to link the reformers with the lower echelons. The second is a law on informal organizations, which would permit the creation of parallel structures and legitimate them. Of course, only a strong center and a strong dictator can ratify a law dealing with a reform of the Party. Here is an elementary example. For three years, we have been proposing direct elections of first secretaries — at least at the precinct or city level. But nothing has come of it. For this reason, the braking mechanism practically remains intact. If in fact congresses of both the Party and the soviets will coexist and be convened, the conflict between these two structures will intensify. It seems to me that they must be reformed in accord with an integral concept so that they spur each other on and stop getting in each other's way.

When new interests emerge in the process of the de-statization of the economic sphere, it would of course be tragic for the society carrying out these reforms if it did not expeditiously draw into cooperation, legalize,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and legitimate conflicts of interest. If this does not happen, the conflicts will go underground. Incidently, this was the case in Russia after the murder of Tsar Alexander II.

In practice, China was thrust into crisis by a delay in political reforms which could draw newly emerging interests into an institutional mechanism for conflict resolution. After ten years of successful economic reforms, Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese lost their momentum and procrastinated in introducing political reforms. But this also would not be tragic. It was no accident that I raised this question because journalists literally hounded Gorbachev in Peking and Paris. He ducked the question everywhere. The "specter of Tienanmen" also hangs over some squares in our country. When such democratic movements appear during periods of reforms, they must be very aware of what objectives they are pursuing. While absolutely condemning the barbarism of tanks crushing people in the Square, I personally cannot place all the blame for what happened on the government. Why? For over a month, a crowd of one million practically occupied the Square, disrupted the visit of the head of a great power, issued an ultimatum demanding a review of the problems of corruption and the retirement of the entire top leadership of the country. The government began a dialogue and promised to review many issues. But here another question arises. What was this movement for? Was this an act of civil disobedience, a demonstration, or a bid to seize power? Evidently, they could not seize power. A demonstration has a beginning and an end. But if this was an act of civil disobedience, then it had a definite symbolic significance. That is when people want to draw attention to themselves and to capture world public opinionion by violating the law, but again with very clearly expressed aims. They said: there is such and such an injustice, which has not been discussed and not resolved by legal means. Then measures were adopted to draw attention to them. At least, this is the way an act of civil disobedience is understood in the liberal theory of democracy. This is the final means of redressing incorrect decisions of some sort; resorting to illegal means in trying to correct them. However, even in very sound democracies, a crisis sparked by protracted acts of civil disobedience — the US during the Vietnam War — can severely destabilize the country's political situation. It can provoke a segment of society to prod the government to use force to restore order and defend democratic institutions. Western thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas, Ralf Dahrendorf and others believe that if long sieges of civil disobedience took place in West

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Germany, a democracy which is not solid and deeply rooted could not withstand it. But imagine a country implementing a modernization which is absolutely not democratic, while making a transition from totalitarianism to authoritarianism. During these periods, regimes are unusually vulnerable. Both in the *nomenklatura* and in society are a colossal number of opponents to reforms. Such protracted activity under these conditions (acts of civil disobedience) creates a dangerous crisis, which in some cases can play into the hands of the opponents of modernization. If students had left after the first contacts with authorities and the promises made to review the problems raised by them, this demonstration would have been a powerful stimulus for further reforms and the consolidation of reformist forces. But when the democratic pressure from below pushed beyond a certain boundary — a boundary difficult to determine and left to the judgment of the leaders of the democratic forces — then the results were exactly the opposite. China was thrown backwards. China's image was badly "tarnished." Capital began to leave. The West threatened embargoes and penalties, etc. And the country suffered something of a psychological breakdown.

M. Chumakova: Don't you think the West German example demonstrates that an external factor can enable a country to skip through authoritarianism and pass directly to democracy?

Migranian: There are considerable substantial differences between the German regime and ours. First, the economic sphere in Germany was never nationalized. Second, the general level of culture in West Germany was incommensurably higher. There was no moral collapse and breakdown of the work ethic as we have experienced for the past 70 years. Of course, and this was very important in West Germany, Japan and South Korea, this process of a transition to democracy was safeguarded by two means — bread and coercion. These countries were safeguarded by American weaponry: in one instance, by American soy beans; in the other, by the Marshall Plan. It would also be splendid to safeguard in some way our own transition. This is actually why China established free economic zones, small local Marshall Plans.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Democrats Must Take a Stand

Igor Kliamkin

Somehow, everything that has been said here about modernization in Latin America indicates that, at least at certain stages, it takes place within the framework of authoritarian political regimes. In this respect, Latin America at the end of the 20th century is retracing the path traveled by the West between the 17th and the 19th centuries, taking into account the general context of the epoch as well as the regions' and the countries' peculiarities.

In this connection, Korolev's remark about the international orientation of the most economically developed Latin American authoritarian regimes is relevant, i.e., their effort to develop policies seeking affiliation with modern transnational corporations, the world market, and the international division of labor rather than hopelessly following the steps of many other Latin American countries in developing national markets walled off by tariff barriers. Today, national interests can no longer be represented by a nationalist ideology predicated on confrontation with the rest of the world. National interests can be best articulated in terms of cooperation and openness towards the world, insertion into its linkages, and not through even temporary self-exclusion.

Despite its inconclusiveness and the fact that hitherto it has generated more questions than answers, the Latin American experience is extremely important for understanding problems of the modernization of countries of really-existing socialism. Of course, the latter are original and in many respects unique. Any attempt to resolve them by analogy with other regions would be dogmatic and simplistic. This originality and uniqueness, however, can only be grasped through comparison with other countries and regions. The upshot is that authoritarian rather than democratic regimes are usually the norm during the period of transition to a developed market economy.

Are really-existing socialist countries fated to retrace the path the West originally traveled, which is now being taken by Latin America? This question cannot be answered yet, because the political process in really-existing socialist countries has just begun. But even now, it is clear that there are problems which make the transition to a market economy more complicated than has hitherto been the case elsewhere.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Similarly, there are other features modulating the intensity of problems likely to crop up during the transition.

The complication is that really-existing socialist countries must carry out the transition to the market and to democracy from totalitarianism, i.e., from an extremely unfavorable starting point characterized by a nationalized economic system consolidated through the forcible liquidation of market relations and the establishment of political-ideological production linkages instead of economic ones. This circumstance makes the process unprecedented, even when compared with Latin America, where property relations are more favorable for a transition to contemporary forms of economic management. If Latin America could not avoid authoritarianism, then how can one expect to avoid it during the process of dismantling totalitarian structures and replacing them with contemporary economic and political mechanisms?

Such hopes are seemingly futile. Yet not everything about this question is obvious. The point is that, in most socialist countries which have launched reforms (with the exception of China) industrialization and urbanization have already been largely accomplished. This is a considerable (and seldom considered) advantage in comparison with modernization in Latin America. Urbanization eliminates the distinctions between modern and traditional cultures, as well as the prospect of the mass marginalization of rural populations which was one of the main sources of confrontations during the transition from an agrarian to an urban civilization. These clashes in turn provided the basis for the emergence of authoritarian political regimes. In other words, the transition to a market economy in really-existing socialist countries will be a transition from an industrial to a scientific-technical civilization rather than from an agrarian to an industrial one as was and still is largely the case in other regions. This peculiarity requires a thorough analysis.

So far, this question has been posed in the most abstract form. But even this is important, because it introduces the world experience of a transition to market capitalist relations, and establishes the complex multifaceted linkage between democratization in the economy and in politics. In this, I also see the point of the joint statement Migranian and I published in *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, August 16, 1989. Here it is important to point out some essential differences between Migranian's position and my own. The main distinction is that I see "authoritarianism" as a concept which allows the application of a preliminary theoretical model to Soviet realities and the application of the problems of a transition to a market economy. However, this model does not provide

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

any knowledge about these concrete realities, and cannot be the basis of a political program. Moreover, for Migranian "authoritarianism" is something whose acceptance and implementation is supposedly able to prevent the catastrophic developments precipitated by the democratization of a society historically unprepared for it.

This approach does not seem to be methodologically sound. It is not based on a concrete analysis of real social interests but on a certain model applicable irrespective of these interests. Thus this constitutes a return to Enlightenment normative schemes. It was the same 18th century French intellectuals who sought to instruct their monarchs concerning enlightened rational behavior. This was to allow France to make the transition to a civilized state while outstripping England (which had attained it through revolution) and at the same time avoid a revolution on French soil. There were also reformers who tried to implement rationalist schemes (e.g., Turgot), which were actually carried through only to the extent permitted by existing power relations.

The failure of these reforms frequently lead to a confrontation of interests, and anybody familiar with world history would want to avoid their repetition in the USSR. But no one has yet managed to do this by appealing to authoritarianism as a means to forestall and avert confrontation. This is impossible for the simple reason that, during reforms and revolutions, authoritarian regimes usually arise as a result of confrontations and not as attempts to forestall them. Before it emerges, no one is interested in authoritarianism. Everyone, or the overwhelming majority, will be against it, including the potential autocrat. Since he lacks broad popular support, he cannot implement any reforms. Thus he seeks to avoid a situation where all responsibility for the country's fate rests on him alone. During the reformation of a totalitarian system, broad popular support can only be won through democratization or, what is the same thing, offering the people at least some say in determining the direction of events. This means certifying a broad spectrum of interests which do not coincide with the corporate interests of the ruling apparatus.

Methodological differences also result in political differences between Migranian and myself. At the present stage, he objects to democratization on principle. He believes that it will lead to political destabilization and counterposes to it, as more reliable, the strengthening of the personal authority of the leader-reformer. My point is that the introduction of a partial democratization will enhance the power of the leader and elevate him above the apparatus. He will be provided

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with an additional power base (which both Khrushchev and Brezhnev lacked) in the form of a national legislature which has elected him to the highest office. Therefore, my assessment of events such as the elections of people's deputies and of the convening of their first congress differ fundamentally from Migranian's. In brief, if we must pass through a period of authoritarianism, then it can only be as a result of democratization revealing and legitimating various interests, but in no way an alternative to it. In turn, only democratization can show whether we can avoid authoritarianism or if it is possible for society to achieve a consensus on basic principles.

There is also another philosophical objection. Considering the possibility of authoritarianism, I asked myself: What should an individual of democratic convictions do with regard to this authoritarianism? This is a cruel dilemma. By appealing to authoritarianism in the name of a future democracy one has to repudiate democratic convictions and cease to be a democrat. This is unacceptable. It is very difficult to live one's political life twice: first, by serving an authoritarian regime and then becoming a democrat after authoritarianism has run its course.

A democrat must always remain a democrat. If, at some stage, democratic goals cannot be objectively realized other than through authoritarianism, it does not follow that a democrat must support the establishment and consolidation of these "historically necessary" forms. Those doing the appealing will not be in short supply: the holy place was never empty. But unlike them, for a democrat authoritarianism can never be the goal, even if temporary or tactical, but can only be the objective context within which to work. The content of this work will always remain the same: the development of a democratic society, i.e., it must represent the democratic future in an authoritarian present. Conversely, in the opposite case, no authoritarianism (even the most progressive) will automatically develop into a democracy.

It is also important for democrats to take a stand here, if only because not every authoritarianism which seeks to transform a socialist into a market economy will be able to do so. Therefore, people attempting to reconcile authoritarianism with democracy must call not for one but two types of authoritarian regimes in succession.

The experience of Hungary under Kadar and Poland under Jaruzelski shows that authoritarianism based on the Party's monopoly of power can only begin to move towards a market economy but cannot complete the transition. The main obstacle here is the sector of large state industry which is the economic and social power base of mono-party regimes in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

socialist countries. Significant strata of industrial workers are neither predisposed towards a transition to a market economy and the structural overhaul of the economy nor are they willing to accept the burdens connected with it. Therefore, during crises and decline of authority, authoritarian regimes are compelled to delegate responsibility to other political forces and thus to share power with them.

But will the emerging democratic regimes be able to cope with these difficulties of the transition to a market economy which one-party regimes are unable to handle? Will there be a consensus concerning the basic aims of the reform? The question remains open. None of the countries (especially those which recently began reforms with the abolition of constitutional articles concerning the leading role of the Communist Party) have provided an answer. This, however, does not rule out that the polarization of interests which will inevitably arise during the organization of a market economy will create the preconditions for the emergence of new authoritarian post-communist regimes. In any case, they are by no means idly discussing the need for an "anti-socialist dictator" in the ranks of the Polish *Solidarnosc*. In such situations, democrats must also take a stand, while keeping in mind that we will not be able to live two different political lives.

Will the USSR Need 200 Years to Develop a Democracy?

Irina Zorina

It is long past the time to repudiate Stalinist dogma about the bourgeoisie leaning towards political reaction and "throwing overboard the banner of democracy." On the contrary, it has become generally recognized that democracy has attained its furthest development and legal-constitutional consolidation in the West, where it is nourished by a strong civil society checking the monopolistic tendencies of the state Leviathan and of the administrative bureaucracy, and where the individual as producer, consumer, and creator has considerable guarantees for self-development — even if these are not ideal. After all, no society

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has yet achieved the ideal postulated by those utopias which exist only in the minds of socialist dreamers and are frequently transformed into reactionary anti-utopias by attempts to translate them into reality. We must also repudiate the old confrontational definitions of democracy as bourgeois or socialist, elitist or popular. In political and not socialist terms, democracy is an end-in-itself, a universal phenomenon. Equally as universal are the notions of authoritarianism and totalitarianism. It is also important "to distinguish" between totalitarianism and authoritarianism, and recognize the specific connection between authoritarianism and democracy.

An authoritarian regime subordinates civil society, but does not destroy it entirely. This is why, when there is a "softening" of an authoritarian or military regime (as in Brazil in the mid-70s) or its collapse comes about as a result of the failure of economic policy and military defeat (as happened in Argentina during the early 1980s), there is a reemergence of parties which have managed to preserve not just their previous social base but also their name, structure, and even former leaders. Also indicative here is Chile, where the Pinochet regime first deployed considerable repression against the entire democratic movement in its particular aggressive elimination of the "Marxist cancer." Nevertheless, the regime did not succeed in rooting out either the Marxist Left nor in destroying this country's far-flung party structure. During the final days of that regime, and against the background of a general process of democratization in the Southern Cone, a united democratic opposition has now once again crystalized and won an electoral victory.

To the extent that authoritarianism did not entirely destroy the party system which had developed in Latin America, and the military has returned to the barracks, this system was rapidly restored. Democracy gives way to authoritarianism in periods of economic and social upheaval, political polarization, or as a result of a threat to its foundations by the radical Left. But in both democratic and authoritarian regimes of Latin America an economic system founded on private property and providing for the economic autonomy of many direct and indirect political subjects has been basically preserved. This includes small and medium-sized business: the middle class. At a certain moment they all agreed to temporarily surrender all authority to a military dictatorship.

The totalitarian system which arises as a result of an absolute monopoly on property is another matter. This system excludes any social

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

consensus for the simple reason that it does not need it. In a totalitarian system, individual and group interests are dissolved into a common national and popular interest embodied by the revolutionary leader, president, or populist Caudillo. Totalitarian regimes and those bordering on totalitarianism which have developed out of populism or revolutionary romanticism demand not just subordination but "sacred love" and "devotion" to the leader, whether he be the "Father of All the Peoples," the "Genius of the Carpathians and the Danube," or the "Great Helmsman." In a totalitarian society, where everything belongs to the state, absolute power corrupts not just the elite but also the subjects. The latter are deprived of the right to property and economic autonomy. All initiative is lost as a result of the imposition of a multiplicity of decrees and directives. Ordinary people become accustomed to and even genetically inherit this sense of parasitism: the expectation of favors from the state, dictator, patron, or boss.

Today there is a growing interest in Latin America in both historical and contemporary forms of left-wing authoritarianism. Right-wing authoritarian regimes in Latin America and Southern Europe (Spain, Portugal, Greece) have been comparatively well studied. But left-wing authoritarian regimes, both in Latin America and until recently the "Third World," have not been given an objective evaluation because the shroud of a revolutionary-romantic and deliberately exculpatory approach always got in the way. Left-wing dictatorships evolving towards totalitarianism have arisen on the same foundation of backwardness, underdeveloped political culture, and frequently as a result of armed struggle.

The danger here is especially great because, as Lenin put it, revolution "destroys every shred of legality." As a rule, the new "revolutionary legality" abolishes "bourgeois law" and opens the way to individual, class, and social coercion. In these circumstances, if the leader lacks any moral qualms and "terrorist consciousness" prevails, then this society is threatened with destruction, and the world with heightened tension as a result of the unpredictability of such a dictatorship.

Nazism and Stalinism are not the only historical examples of totalitarianism. Shoots of totalitarianism have sprouted and will continue to sprout on the soil of "Third World" countries. The liberal democratic model will have difficulty taking root here. The shoots of national fascist or uniform socialist schemes will resurface in the face of an upsurge of economically and socially unfounded growing expectations, utopian consciousness, and faith in a mystical charismatic leader or

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

movement. Once again, flesh-and-blood individuals will be offered in sacrifice to a radiant future. New programs for the construction of heaven on earth will once again be worked out for a happy collective of "individuals." "War Communism" and "military barracks socialism" are not just Russian but rather international phenomena. This dangerous disease can flourish in the "Third World," where there is growing marginalization and social tension in poorly integrated national societies. During social upheaval, when the majority of the population senses that the old epoch has come to an end and the enormous mass of politically semi-literate and illiterate people enter the political arena but are not yet ready to assume responsibility while being aware of their vulnerability, the need will arise for a Stalin-like leader, a Führer, a charismatic populist leader.

In backward countries, both elite and plebeian classes are susceptible to violent and dictatorial rule. Whether the representatives of the elite gain unlimited power or their opponents usurp it in the name of the lower classes, Right and Left dictatorships will emerge in the "Third World." They can range from Peron's populist demagogic "anti-imperialist" regime in Argentina, to the openly right-wing terrorist dictatorships in Central America and a number of African countries. They can be hostile to one another. But they remain authoritarian and even totalitarian dictatorships, pro-American and anti-imperialist, assuming a "bourgeois" cast or a form of "direct democracy." Kampuchea is not the only example of a "socialist experiment" degenerating into a terrorist dictatorship.

As a rule, Left dictatorships are distinguished by an apology for "equality in poverty" and special "dignity" achieved through the revolution. We can even recall the Soviet mendicant enthusiasm of the early post-revolutionary years: "The Soviet people have their pride," or the argument frequently used by the Cuban leader (designed to justify economic shortcomings and low efficiency) that the people gained "dignity" as a result of the revolution. With "dignity" and a special form of pride, these regimes deliberately cast off all the attributes of "bourgeois democracy" as outmoded or socially mendacious. These regimes have no need of a pluralism of opinions and parties. They are protected by "revolutionary unity and popular enthusiasm." Totally controlled forms of direct democracy implanted from above, whether in the guise of "Committees of Defense of the Revolution" or "Popular Revolutionary Committees," extirpate and preclude the development of movements independent of the regime. A state monopoly of production

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and all forms of property and social life exclude any possibility of an autonomous political movement.

For all their superficial and loudly proclaimed unity, there is in fact no unanimity of various groups in totalitarian and terrorist regimes arising in backward "Third World" societies, which can easily disintegrate during a crisis. Given the lack of a "positive" socio-economic program, there is only universal coercion. Of course, autonomous social institutions and a democratic legal order will not by themselves prevent various social evils and deformations. Depending on concrete conditions, democratic means can prove both more and less effective than those of authoritarian regimes which forcibly eliminate their opponents and gain stability at the expense of independent initiative. In developing societies where democratic systems have begun to take shape, they usually exist only in embryonic form and have hitherto lacked the stability and irreversibility which can only be acquired over a long historical period. But necessity need not be turned into a virtue. After all, there is no path to the establishment of a genuinely modern society bypassing democracy. Therefore, the differences between the pluralist parliamentary system of India — for all its faults — and the military regimes which have been established in Asia, Africa, and Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s are not just superficial variations of the same social system or the same phase of development, but one of the main lines of demarcation between the "Third World" and the contemporary world in general.

We have a good understanding of how authoritarian and especially military regimes break down and disappear. The transition of a totalitarian society to democracy, however, is more difficult to imagine. Concern with the fact that there is no direct path from totalitarianism to democracy is understandable. But I cannot agree with Migranian's analysis of how this applies to the USSR. It is often claimed that, since all of society has been paralyzed by totalitarianism, one can hardly expect its evolution towards democracy to come from within. Yet today the USSR is not totalitarian. Of course, this is only the beginning of the construction of a democratic state based on law. But it has already gone beyond even a purely authoritarian system. Thus there are the elections and the Congress of People's Deputies, extensive *glasnost* and pluralism of opinions in the mass media, the rapid growth of informal movements and organizations, the miners' strikes assuming a political character, etc. Of course, where the *diktat* of the ministerial departments remains intact, the monopoly structure of the economy will only be reformed with difficulty.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Although the USSR is quite backward with regard to the establishment of civic structures, we need not wait 200 years while doling out democratic reason in the English manner. At least two factors will facilitate democratization. The first is our integration into world development. This is not England two centuries ago. In becoming interdependent, the world has changed. This will help. To the extent that the USSR becomes further integrated into the world economy and participates in international organizations on the basis of a recognition of international law, domestic legislation conforming to universal laws of civilized society must be introduced. Secondly, the establishment and development of social structures independent from the state is now going ahead perhaps for the first time in Soviet history. The mood of the people, the working masses, the trade unions, youth, and the intelligentsia, has changed. The latest sociological surveys show that the majority of those polled (80%) support the death penalty and almost every one is willing to take up arms to carry out reprisals. Naturally such ferocity is frightening. Once again, there is rabid spontaneity, anarchy, and "freedom." Nevertheless, without deifying the people, *perestroika* from above has set in motion constructive forces. At the same time, there is the danger of populism which appeals to the sentiments of the masses who do not know any other means of reform than dividing up everything anew and applying in administration the same command methods.

Whether Left or Right, the populism which emerges during moments of crisis does not lead to democracy. On the contrary, populism is most frequently authoritarian in content. Where is the guarantee that the authoritarian dictator will necessarily be "enlightened," and will implant democratic institutions from above? Perhaps once again, the usual dictator taking advantage of plebeian spontaneity and revolutionary turbulence will establish a far-flung administrative party mechanism staffed by new cadres, but not different in principle from the old one, by subordinating the individual to the collective, the party, and the state. Bazhanov, who was Stalin's secretary in the 1920s, provides a splendid account of the mechanism of the establishment of such an apparatus in his memoirs.

In other words, proceeding from the political theory of liberal democracy, Migranian seems to claim that the liberal democratic model will win out after having undergone an authoritarian infancy and adolescence because there is no alternative. There is no rational alternative to a democratic *perestroika* in the USSR. This, however, does not exclude the possibility of an irrational alternative.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Soviet Union and Europe

Daniel N. Nelson

Will the Soviet Union ever be accepted as part of Europe? Can Russia be part of a "common European home" without disrupting European security and economic interests? Answers to these questions depend on the relative power of the "superpowers," the extent of America's presence in Europe, the strength and direction of a reunified Germany, the progress made by post-communist systems in Eastern Europe to create democratic institutions, and many other factors. These are the conditions that will frame a Soviet role in European affairs.

The End of Superpowers

Through hegemonic alliances, military interventions, disinformation, assassinations, proxy wars, and a variety of other means, the superpowers have for decades sought to manage history. This is no longer possible. Global confrontation, repeated and disastrous military interventions, extraordinarily expensive new weapons systems, etc. all added ever larger weight to the fragile socioeconomic and political bases of the East/West conflict.[1] A mistaken interpretation of recent geopolitical events is that the US has won the Cold War. Upheavals in Eastern Europe and the USSR have been paralleled by a more subtle upheaval in the West

1. The literature about defense costs, mostly limited to military expenditures (which is but one facet of military effort), is voluminous. One problem with this literature is that there have been few attempts to compare the trade-offs incurred by Western states versus the USSR and its allies during the Cold War. See Thomas Lucid, Judith Reppy and George Staller, eds., *The Economic Consequences of Military Spending in the United States and the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Peace Studies Program, 1986); and Daniel N. Nelson and Joseph Lepgold, "Alliances and Burden-sharing: A NATO-Warsaw Pact Comparison," *Defense Analysis*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1986), pp. 205-224.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through which *sovereignty* in economic, diplomatic and security arrangements has been reasserted by West European countries. At the same time, both superpowers have mortgaged their futures to far- flung clients and military expenditures. Failing to recognize interdependencies of national futures, they have wasted resources, accepted inefficiencies, and contributed to socioeconomic inequalities.

For the Soviets, this took a significant toll.[2] Throughout the USSR the economic infrastructure has remained woefully underdeveloped, while transportation and communication networks in the civilian sector are in no way comparable to those in Central Europe. The Cold War did not *create* the USSR's economic dilemmas. Central planning did enough to engender gross inefficiencies and maldistribution of resources. The problem was compounded by the near exhaustion of these human and material resources which resulted in the abatement of extensive growth. The onerous levels of Soviet military effort, involvement in the "Third World," and maintenance of huge armed forces in Eastern Europe were also contributing factors. Ample data is available from which to infer the significant, albeit small, negative effect of military commitments in the USSR and its Warsaw Pact allies on GNP *per capita* growth rates, productivity growth rates and other measures of economic performance. This may have been the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back.[3]

Gorbachev and his closest associates have acknowledged these economic costs. Foreign Minister Shevardnadze was particularly forthright in early 1987, when he spoke to officials of his Ministry and argued that Soviet ". . . relations with other states [must] burden our economy as little as possible and create a stable psychological environment wherein Soviet citizens can work in peace."[4] Shevardnadze by no means represents all of Soviet elite opinion. His views do, however, mirror the assessments

2. In 1988, former Soviet Finance Minister Boris Gostev acknowledged a Soviet budget deficit for 1986-1987 of 11% of the GNP (more than twice the US level at its worst point). Initial reports of the Soviet deficit underestimated the final calculations. Yet, Gostev's first account of the deficit was a devastating indictment. See David Remnick, "Soviet Officials Detail Budget, Paint Grim Economic Picture," *Washington Post* (October 28, 1988).

3. For statistical relations between measures of military effort and economic performance within WTO countries, see Daniel N. Nelson, "Power at What Price? The High Cost of Security in the WTO," *The Journal of Soviet Military Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (September 1989), p. 329.

4. *Vestnik Ministerstva inostrannykh del SSSR*, No. 2 (1987), p. 31. More recently, Shevardnadze has railed against the costs of superpower conflict and of "an immense military infrastructure." He asks further, "What is the price of it? . . . No one has come up with an estimate. But it is the people's money . . . I know the cost of the Cold War in its monetary and political terms . . . [W]e have impoverished our people and the whole country. Poverty and privation of the people can in no way promote the country's security." See Eduard Shevardnadze, "Away With Myths," in *Vestnik* (June 1990), p. 24.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of a number of Western analysts.[5]

For the US too, resources and therefore power have been depleted as a consequence of global confrontation with the Soviet Union and communism. American losses have been more hidden. Without wanting to pay for defense budgets (that never fell below $200 billion per year in 1990 dollars since the Korean War) with either higher taxes or lower living standards, Americans have spent money they did not have, and financed budget deficits through debt. Other countries began to buy up that debt in the 1980s, such that at the end of the decade the US was both the world's largest debtor nation and a country in which foreign investments exceeded American investments abroad. Again, it was not worldwide competition with communism that *caused* the US to become a debtor nation, to run very high deficits, etc. Yet expanding military spending, coupled with lower taxes, required borrowing of an enormity that could not but harm America's interests. Further, the US political leadership took the Soviet threat to be so imminent and tangible that other socioeconomic needs, which themselves could weaken any country, were assigned far less priority than military preparedness, deployment of new weapons systems or research and development.

American "losses" during the Cold War included, of course, battlefield deaths in Korea, Vietnam, etc. Added to those military casualties should be the generations of black and Hispanic youth of inner cities for whom programs to generate educational opportunities and jobs were unraveled or never begun, the AIDS victims for whom neither solace nor medical research was available until epidemic proportions endangered the larger American population, the homeless who grew alarmingly in numbers while urban housing efforts were either cut or squandered, etc. None of these were "caused" by the Cold War, but all were exacerbated by a single-minded perception of the Soviet threat. Only the US was ever a multidimensional superpower, with cultural, economic, political *and* military capacities that exceeded other countries. Even if the US is seen as having maintained a strength and unity that the USSR no longer exhibits, it had much further to fall and a lot more to lose.

As the two superpowers have run into limits on their power, Japan and Germany through dint of their own productivity and because they did not have to expend resources on a global political-military competition,

5. For example, McGwire interprets new political thinking in international affairs as a consequence of the Soviets' own recognition of heavy political and military costs caused by their offensive posture in Europe. See Michael McGwire, *Perestroika and Soviet National Security* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1989).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have re-emerged to assume predominant economic roles. In banking and finance, technological applications in the consumer sector, in foreign investments, etc., both have soared during the 1980s.[6] Little imagination is required to see, by the end of the 1990s, the erstwhile superpowers playing secondary roles to a powerful Germany in Europe and a powerful Japan in the Pacific rim. Although this power may still be primarily economic, both countries (and especially Japan) could expand military forces rapidly, and would then have the capability to perform many of the roles formerly played by the superpowers.

In the military sector, Soviet and American power has clearly been challenged around the world. During the 1970s and 1980s a number of countries gained not only the capacity to manufacture weapons of mass destruction, but the ability to build delivery systems that can threaten distant adversaries. A dozen or more states are thought to possess intermediate-range missiles capable of delivering nuclear or chemical/biological weapons,[7] and countless armed forces deploy anti-ship or air-ground missiles with the capacity to destroy the best Soviet or American naval vessels or land installations (not to mention "soft" civilian targets). The vulnerability of the post-war superpowers to damaging attack from states that used to have no such capacity changes the world's military equation far more than decisions in Washington or Moscow to reduce armaments and cut deployments abroad.

US Presence in Europe

From the time of Tocqueville's observations on Russia and America, it was evident that these two large states would shape much of Europe's future. But the main effect of external powers in the 20th century has not been to determine the political dynamics of Europe. It has been reactive and preventative. Despite the brief period of Bolshevik activism in Central Europe (especially in 1918-1919), and Soviet support for

---

6. Prime Minister Kaifu's tour of Eastern Europe in January, 1990 suggests his country's intention to play a leading role in the re-development of post-communist states. Kaifu was reported to have said that ". . . Japan is ready to extend $1.95 billion . . . in [combined] economic, technological and food assistance to Poland and Hungary." See "Kaifu Supports Eastern Bloc Reform on European Tour," *Liberal Star* (February 15, 1990), p. 2. This amount is more than twice the American aid that Congress allocated through the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act. Similarly, Kohl's triumph in reuniting Germany will greatly enhance Germany's significant economic role in Eastern Europe and the USSR.

7. For a full account of Third World nuclear and chemical/biological weapons development, see Leonard S. Spector, *Nuclear Ambitions: The Spread of Nuclear Weapons 1989-1990* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Greek communist insurgents in the late 1940s, neither it nor its successors had significant influence on the domestic politics of Central and West European countries not occupied by the Red Army. Instead, Stalin and other Soviet leaders intervened either to prevent other European powers from gaining dominance (e.g., in the Spanish Civil War), or to repress liberalization movements within their post-WWII bloc. In all these cases, Soviet action was military in nature, intended to halt impending changes or transitions already under way. In this and other respects, the Soviet Union has been a conservative power. Few other powerful states have exhibited the same *status quo* orientation for so long.

The US is such a nation. Particularly in the context of Europe, neither the US nor the USSR are sanguine about prospects for an economically united Western Europe ("1992"), which leaves both out. Neither can be entirely at ease with a reunified Germany, no matter what its association with NATO. Each has festering disputes among erstwhile alliance partners that threaten to escalate beyond rhetoric.[8] The American President speaks of "caution" and "prudence" about the acceleration of European history, just as the Soviet leader reminds Europeans of the need to move carefully towards German unification and a post-Cold War security structure. Addressing the Central Committee Plenum on December 9, 1989, Gorbachev stated: "We seek to ensure progress and stability in every way — *stability* in these countries [European socialist countries, i.e., WTO members] themselves, in the Eastern European region, and on the whole continent — as well as the inviolability of postwar borders of all the states in Europe." Later in the same speech, he reminded his Party audience that at the Malta summit with President Bush the two leaders ". . . achieved a reassuring degree of mutual understanding about the need to pursue a *well-considered and cautious line* in the conditions of deep processes taking place in Western and Eastern Europe."[9]

Gorbachev wants the US to remain engaged in Europe *because* Americans are a critical element of a stable security environment for Soviet interests. In the Soviets' eyes, a Europe without an evident American presence is a Europe dominated by an economic behemoth — Germany — and by interests inimical to Soviet security. In his speech to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in July, 1989 Gorbachev called

8. [Italics added]. For NATO, one finds these disputes particularly acute between Greece and Turkey. See Daniel N. Nelson, "Keep an Eye on Turkey," *The National Interest* (Spring 1990).

9. Mikhail Gorbachev, "Speech to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union" (December 9, 1989), in *Pravda* (December 10, 1989).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for the US to participate in the "common European home" which he too was seeking to enter. He specifically referred to the USSR and the US as ". . . a natural part of the European international-political structure" and said that their participation in its evolution "is not only justified, but also historically determined."[10]

Further evidence of this recognition of America's stabilizing role is the Soviet acceptance not only of asymmetrical force reductions, but also for a somewhat *larger* US force presence in Europe.[11] In reacting positively to Bush's initiative to lower both American and Soviet troop strength in Central Europe to 195,000, but with an additional 30,000 American troops not based in Germany excluded from the 195,000 ceiling, the USSR provided an implicit acknowledgement that Moscow's greatest interest now lies in avoiding the resurgence of another threat. The Soviets see clearly that they *need* American assistance to tether and control the inherent power of a reunified Germany, and the volatility of an Eastern Europe no longer constrained by Soviet hegemony. Paradoxically, the Soviet leadership may *trust* the US far more than Kohl and others.

Germany and the Line Between Russia and Europe

As Germany resumes its history as a single state, the Russian role in Central Europe will recede. Whether this is a precipitous evacuation or a phased departure depends on Germany — which can be affected, but not controlled, by other European powers. Germany today can build on more than four decades of democracy and sound economic achievements. It is also a country that does not possess offensive weaponry in quantities that destabilize European security and, as a signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, it is on record as opposing the development of nuclear weapons. Because of demographics and recognition of concerns among neighbors, purposeful limitations on the size of the *Bundeswehr* have been self-imposed. Strong anti-military sentiments are prevalent in the population, and the commitment to pluralism seems deeply embedded. Yet Germany does not need to be a threat to be threatening — especially to the USSR. The mere re-emergence of a state with 80 million people and an economy that will be the world's

10. See "Gorbachev's Address to the Council of Europe," TASS Dispatch (July 6, 1989) reprinted in *News and Views from the USSR*. Distributed by the Soviet Embassy, Washington, DC (July 7, 1989), p. 3.

11. For a report on this Soviet reaction, see Walter S. Mossberg, "Soviets Concede Advantage to US in European Troops," *The Wall Street Journal* (February 14, 1990), p. 10.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

largest exporter, with a GNP larger than that of Britain and France combined, cannot be viewed as reassuring.

Much of the USSR's post-war European policy was not meant to push the US out of Europe but to maintain a divided Germany as long as possible.[12] But the Soviet presence in the middle of Europe has always rested on the Red Army, augmented by ties between ruling communist parties and the Warsaw Pact. The structure of Soviet involvement has been narrowly based on politico-military security. Of course, Comecon was always a weak shadow of the Common Market, with the artificial dependencies created through non-convertible currencies and parallel inefficiences of centrally-planned economies being the only centripetal forces other than Soviet hegemony. Within Comecon, trade was substantial, but largely enforced by Soviet political-military suzerainty. Outside energy and natural resources, trade growth was stagnant for years and manufactured commodities were highly concentrated in the low end of technology (e.g., prepared foods, textiles, construction materials).[13] The USSR remained the main trading partner of East European states because nothing else was available, not because of any comparative advantage.

Communist parties, however, ruled only as long as there was the likelihood of military action to preserve them. With the defeat or ouster of communist parties in Eastern Europe, Moscow lost both direct political influence and a rationale for maintaining troops in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Assuming the continued orderly departure of Soviet forces from Hungary and Czechoslovakia, *and* the ongoing rule of at least a leftist coalition in Moscow, there will no longer be any strings the Soviets can pull. Without its military presence, and denied both economic and political leverage, the USSR will have effectively retreated from Europe.

Gorbachev's policy, of course, is not to withdraw from Europe, but rather to unravel a costly empire in an orderly fashion. German unification upset his goals and means, for he must now try to ensure the neutralization of Germany. He can no longer act unilaterally. Germany within NATO, but with an eastern zone housing Soviet forces for a few years, is an inherently temporary compromise that will do little to retain Soviet influence in Central Europe. Without either a *cordon sanitaire* in Eastern Europe or a grip on Germany, the USSR is being presented with the choice of trying to be a superpower outside Europe, or

12. See Christopher Jones, *Soviet Influence in Eastern Europe* (New York: Praeger, 1982).

13. For data concerning this trade, see CIA, *Handbook of Economic Statistics* (Washington, DC: CIA, 1988), pp. 164-165.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

accepting the withering of its long-coveted parity with the US. Under Gorbachev or any other foreseeable leader, the Soviets will have no choice but to accept the former. To have begun a pullback from Eastern Europe, and then to have such a withdrawal turn into a retreat bodes ill for European stability unless redressed through the kind of enlarged security structures the Soviets (and others) have been discussing.[14]

The Soviet Role in Europe

If the Soviet Union can no longer exert hegemony from the Baltic to the Bosporus, America's presence and Germany's resurgence will be two key factors determining the degree of residual Soviet involvement in Europe. But a third factor, and one that is even less well understood in the West, is the prognosis for healthy democracies in Eastern Europe. In those states, where communist parties ruled for over forty years, weak, dissolute coalition governments will invite nationalist extremism and military takeovers. In that worst-case scenario, the Soviet role in Europe would deteriorate to conflict-driven policies, with border disputes, ethnic frictions, economic interests, etc. heightening tensions. At the other end of this speculative scale, one can imagine a Soviet role in Europe mediated by a region of stable democracies, characterized by pluralism, the rule of law, and competitive electoral systems.

The uninterrupted transformation of the system from one-party rule to multi-party democracy is necessary if the USSR is to have a place in Europe. One certain way to set Russia adrift is to end abruptly the movement towards political democratization and economic "marketization." Regardless of Gorbachev's own fate, the policies he introduced will be a key determinant of the Soviet role in a European house. Building a secure democracy, however, is harder than defeating tyrants. The latter effort *unites* disparate interests, while the nature of democracy is competition within a pluralist environment. If democratization continues in the Soviet Union, domestic political processes will be conflictual, and elections will provide many opportunities for demagogues, corruption and trivialization.

In some countries of the former Soviet bloc, prospects are excellent for lasting democracies. Czechoslovak institutions appear to be most solid, with Hungarian and Polish democracy standing better-than-even chances of maturing beyond the current nascent stages. Infrastructure

14. Shevardnadze has argued for a single common security system to emerge from NATO and the WTO. See "Towards a Greater Europe — The Warsaw Treaty Organization and NATO in a Renewing Europe," in *NATO: Sixteen Nations* (April-June 1990).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

weaknesses, limited experience with mundane but critical aspects of electoral procedure (campaigning, financing, candidate recruitment, etc.) and numerous unresolved constitutional/legal questions (will there be judicial review? what are the limits of local autonomy?) and unclear boundaries between military and civilian prerogatives constrain optimism about democracy in Eastern Europe as well as the USSR. Poland has adopted a "cold-turkey" approach by seeking to absorb the psychological shock and political costs while the Solidarity government still has a reservoir of good will and public support. Nevertheless, no path can avoid a painful policy dilemma. Making policies that affect state involvement in the economy involves a clash of values. Popular expectations of employment, subsidized housing, distributive fairness and equity will not die easily. Even leaders with unquestioned legitimacy, rooted in electoral victory and undeniable personal popularity, must tread carefully when addressing these issues. To end abruptly state ownership and governmental guarantees for citizens' socioeconomic rights would dampen enthusiasm for a democratic transition, and each new government will have to mix cautiously what must be done to revitalize their economies with popular expectations of the state's obligations towards its citizens. Out of this turbulent transition period may come a region of newly endowed democracies, plural and stable, in which conflicts are mediated through electoral mechanisms and foreign policies pursued through non-military means.

As a new Europe emerges from a continent divided for almost half a century, there are no evident structures that guarantee democracy, disarmament and prosperity. Hegemonic alliances — NATO and the Warsaw Pact — will be irrelevant to a united Western Europe and an Eastern Europe of sovereign, independent states. The notion of recasting both NATO and the Warsaw Pact into primarily political instruments gained currency in Moscow and Washington in 1989, and neither the Soviets nor the Americans have countenanced unilateral withdrawals from these organizations.[15] Yet the effort to retain post-war alliances in their current form, albeit less well-endowed with the means for offensive warfare, is a false assurance. Post-war security arrangements in Europe cannot accommodate German unity, the dismemberment of Yugoslavia, protracted civil wars or popular uprisings in the Balkans or elsewhere, or the emergence of a right-wing nationalist bloc within Eastern Europe —

15. For a Warsaw Pact reformulation into a "mature political union," see Mikhail Bezrukov and Andrei Kortunov, "What Kind of Alliance do We Need?," in *New Times*, No. 41, pp. 10-16 (October 1989).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

all of which are possible.

Reverting to a multiplicity of bilateral arrangements as the bedrock of European peace also entails an illusory security. The Soviets, of course, signed bilateral treaties with countries in the WTO before the Pact was formed in 1955. These so-called treaties of "friendship and cooperation," and interlocking accords for economic, intelligence and other matters, will not provide a sure basis for the pursuit of Soviet interests in the region. Indeed, renunciation of these treaties is likely in most if not all of Eastern Europe. In any case, they offer neither Moscow nor anyone else a counterweight to the possible emergence of conservative nationalism throughout the region, and they would not defuse potential conflicts arising from ethnic, territorial or other longstanding issues. The USSR has long talked of all-European collective security, which was always seen in Washington as merely a way to exclude the US from the continent. Now, however, Soviet rhetoric welcomes a stabilizing American presence. Czechoslovak, Hungarian and other views lean strongly towards the emergence of a new Euro-Atlantic security organization.[16] Any such security organization is often criticized in NATO capitals as being too large, too amorphous and legitimating Moscow's role in Europe. To those who propose this notion, however, it is the *only* means by which to both tether an enlarged and potentially powerful Germany to a larger structure *and* to assure Moscow that its security interests have not been excluded from Central Europe.

The Soviet International Role

A Soviet Union reconstituted as a looser federation, probably with several of the current union republics beginning to operate independently, now seems likely. Foreign policy is conditioned by domestic turmoil. Arguments on all sides of the internal Soviet foreign policy debate are framed with reference to the USSR's cloudy prognosis for stability or prosperity. Yet reconsideration of Moscow's international role was not a product solely of domestic constraints and the pressure of ethnic or economic crises. Western analysts speculated long ago that, once

16. See "Memorandum on the European Security Commission" issued in Prague on April 16, 1990 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic. Hungarian views on the new organization can be found in an interview with Foreign Minister Geza Jeszenszky in *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, No. 30 (July 27, 1990). Poles, too, have advocated a Council of European Cooperation. See the remarks by Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski, "Discours à la Session Extraordinaire du Comité des Ministres du Conseil de l'Europe" (Lisbon, March 24, 1990), mimeographed (Warsaw Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n. d.).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ideological assumptions about the collapse of capitalism turned out to be false, an inevitable adjustment in outlook and behavior would occur. As Kennan observed forty years ago: "[N]o mystical, Messianic movement — and particularly not that of the Kremlin — can face frustration indefinitely without eventually adjusting itself in one way or another to the logic of that state of affairs."[17]

Almost twenty years later, Ulam echoed the same sentiment when he wrote hopefully of a time when the USSR would heed Talleyrand's maxim about France: "To be great once more, France must cease to be colossal," i.e., "abandon expansionism and seek world stability."[18] The discontinuity between power and security that Ulam noted seems to have been recognized by the new Soviet foreign policy.[19] Behavioral changes, however, have not followed automatically and the record shows that Soviet relations with the Third World did not catch up, as it were, with the new thinking until 1988.[20] Personnel changes had first to be implemented, especially within the Foreign Ministry itself. These shifts included the placement of Aleksandr Yakovlev, Anatoli Dobrynin and Vadim Medvedev in key advisory positions next to Gorbachev.[21]

As Gorbachev's commitment to change began to sink in and new faces entered the foreign policy decision-making hierarchy, the new philosophy of Soviet international relations began to take form. As it did, these new ideas became more threatening to the old *nomenklatura*, and to the military-industrial elite. Although the phrase *novoi myshlenie* (new

17. George Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," in Kennan, *American Diplomacy 1900-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp. 127-128.

18. Adam Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence* (New York: Praeger, 1968), p. 752.

19. Gorbachev made this clear at the 27th Party Congress in 1986: "The nature of current weaponry leaves no country with any hope of safeguarding itself solely with military and technical means, for example, by building up a defense, even the most powerful. To ensure security is becoming more and more a political task, and it can only be resolved by political means." See Mikhail Gorbachev, "Politicheskii doklad, tsentral'nogo komiteta KPSS XXVII s'ezdu," *Kommunist* No. 4 (1986), p. 54. It followed that mutual security between superpowers and universal security among all nation-states is required. "The highest wisdom is not to be concerned solely with oneself. . . . It is necessary that everyone feel equally secure, since the fears and anxieties of the nuclear age give rise to unpredictability."

20. For an extensive examination of data on Soviet trade and arms transfers with states in Africa, Latin America and Asia, see Yang Zhong and Daniel N. Nelson, "Domestic Reform and the Third World Policies of China and the USSR," paper presented at the American Political Science Association meeting, San Francisco, CA (September 1990).

21. For an account of these shifts, see Archie Brown, "Changes in the Soviet Union," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. LXIV, No. 5 (1986), pp. 1049-1053; cf. also Stephen White, "The Soviet Political Leadership and Soviet Power," in Daniel N. Nelson and Rajan Menon, eds., *Limits to Soviet Power* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), pp. 49-68.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thinking) was used in innumerable articles, its ultimate implications became clearer only in some of this literature. Thus, by 1987 Primakov and Bovin (Yakovlev's associates) were among those enunciating far-reaching perspectives on the Soviet Union's future position in Europe and elsewhere. To preserve any future for socialism, argued Bovin, a non-confrontational, non-military image of security is necessary. For Primakov, criticizing Soviet policy towards the West, a "philosophy of foreign policy" required both emphasis on mutual/collective security and on the pursuit of ends by non-military means."[22] Beyond Europe, commentary also began to be decidedly critical in 1987 with the publication of Boris Asoian's attack on Soviet perceptions of the Third World and Georgii Mirskii's critical review of past orientations towards developing states.[23]

What do these new orientations mean? Thus far, such views have been associated with a *de facto* strategic retreat, and a withdrawal from political-military competition. These criticisms of past policies may not have *caused* changes. Yet airing alternative views as part of *glasnost* enabled Gorbachev, Shevardnadze and Yakovlev to point towards different policies without having to voice the most scathing attacks themselves. By 1990, there was nothing that could not be said, and was not being forcefully articulated. Thus Karaganov has argued that there is no longer any basis for Soviet-American rivalry in Europe or in the Third World. The decline of the military factor in Europe, and the erosion of US-Soviet rivalry, has left little for which the two superpowers could compete. Furthermore, the deterioration of both superpowers has taken place simultaneously, with the Soviet Union suffering more.[24]

Soviet commentary has turned strongly towards emphasizing a constrained Soviet international role. Because of domestic crises, the Soviet Union's "business" is now at home. This neo-isolationism is widespread, although there are vocal orthodox Marxist-Leninists and some military leaders who disagree.[25] Conservative voices have been harshly critical of Gorbachev's foreign policy, and of the notion of reasonable sufficiency, rapid disarmament, etc. The "loss" of Eastern Europe is being blamed

22. See Yevgeny M. Primakov, "Novaia filosofiia Vneshnei politiki," *Pravda* (July 10, 1987), p. 4; see also Aleksandr Bovin's commentary in *Izvestiia* (July 11, 1987).

23. For Asoian's views, see *Literaturnaia Gazeta* (October 7, 1987), p. 14; Mirskii's argument is in his article "K voprosu o vybore puti i orientatsii razvivaiushehikhsia stan," *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnve otnosheniia* No. 5 (1987), pp. 70-81.

24. See Sergei Karaganov, "The Problem of the USSR's European Policy," in *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 9 (1990); and his "The US-Soviet Relationship After the Cold War," a paper presented at the IISS 32nd Annual Conference in Hot Springs, Virginia, September 6-9, 1990.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on "new thinking," as is the increasingly poor discipline within the military itself.[26] Thus far, however, Gorbachev has not been forced to yield in Soviet foreign policy. A slowing of arms control momentum has been apparent, but much as they might have wanted, the High Command has not been willing or able to derail the Gorbachev line.

Within Europe, the USSR could become, by the mid-1990s, a turbulent, peripheral, but potentially disruptive player in the Continent's security. All this, however, can be modified to Europe's benefit via closer economic, political and security ties. Economic links may be those constructed through private investments and joint ventures. Political and security relations that can restrain Russian irredentism, a new pan-Slavism, or some combination thereof require a more solid structure. That structure is now embryonic, but could be developed to fulfill this need. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) will not evolve unattended, and the West must take the lead. Outside Europe, it is now clear that little Soviet activity can be expected, unless an external threat becomes so severe as to warrant any sacrifice. Soviet military disengagement from Third World clients is almost complete, while military deployments outside Soviet territory (and residual elements in Germany) will become negligible by 1994. Some technicians are still likely to be dispersed around the globe to service Soviet military equipment sold to other governments, and small scale advisory roles in Cuba, Vietnam, and several other longstanding clients will remain. But the downscaling of Soviet forces abroad will continue.

This leaves a Russian-centered confederation that may or may not, retain the name "Soviet Union." A restrained, constructive role in non-European venues can be coextensive with a stable engagement in a European security arrangement. It must not be otherwise. If the rest of the world cannot help the USSR find its way towards such a structured engagement in world affairs, then a Soviet disintegration will be more likely, *and* more likely to be destructive. Without guarantees of their own security, Russians will be unable to accept the unraveling of their empire via democratic processes and/or popular demands.

---

25. The predominant position was aired by Kozyrev in November 1988: ". . . Our country has no interests which would justify any use of armed forces beyond the borders of the socialist community . . . new thinking calls for restraint in choosing means, especially military means, to support regimes which declare themselves progressive but far from always boasting a sufficient democratic basis . . ." See Andrei Kozyrev, "Confidence and the Balance of Interests," *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 11 (November 1988), pp. 3-12.

26. See a report on this matter carried in Radio Liberty, *Report on the USSR* Vol. 2, No. 30 (July 27, 1990).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*Adorno and Derrida on Husserl**

Sabine Wilke

Recently there have been cautious attempts at rapprochement between French poststructuralism and German critical hermeneutics. Thus Manfred Frank, who defends a hermeneutical approach, has entered into a dialogue with some of the French poststructuralists,[1] and in 1983 Habermas and Foucault engaged in an exchange shortly before the latter's death. This dialogue has been joined not only by individual French poststructuralists and German critical theorists. Independent scholars are also beginning to seek closer ties between French and German theory. This is true of many Americans who, having become interested in French poststructuralism in the 1970s, are now growing dissatisfied with it and moving increasingly closer to hermeneutics and Critical Theory.[2] In this context, the relation between Adorno's and Derrida's philosophies is crucial since they both belong in the same philosophical tradition and thus address similar issues. In many cases, they even confront similar authors or texts, constructing their own views in contraposition to them. In fact, both Adorno and Derrida began their careers by criticizing Husserl.

On first glance, the configuration Adorno-Derrida-Husserl appears

* Originally published in German as "Adornos und Derridas Husserllektüre: ein Annäherungsversuch," in *Husserl Studies*, Vol. 5 (1988), pp. 41-68.

1. Manfred Frank, *What is Neostructuralism?*, trans. by Sabine Wilke and Richard T. Gray (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

2. Rainer Nägele, "The Scene of the Other: Theodor W. Adorno's Negative Dialectics in the Context of French Poststructuralism," *boundary 2*, No. 11 (1982-83), pp. 58-79; Michael Ryan, "New French Theory in New German Critique," *New German Critique*, No. 22 (1981), pp. 145-61; Martin Jay, *Adorno* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 21ff.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

problematic. Why did Adorno and Derrida deal with Husserl rather than Heidegger, who played a fundamental role for both authors (even if only negatively in Adorno's case)?[3] It has been suggested that connections between them can be found in their relation to Benjamin, or even by exploring Adorno's relation to Franz Rosenzweig, Emmanuel Lévinas' teacher, who was very influential for Derrida.[4] A comparative study of Adorno's and Derrida's interpretations of Nietzsche may also produce interesting results. All these proposals can trace the problematics, as well as both authors' writing style, by concentrating on concrete examples. Since in both instances their confrontations came early in their philosophical development, a study of Adorno's and Derrida's readings of Husserl may help explain their parallel evolutions away from traditional scholarship towards more critical approaches. The following examination of Adorno's and Derrida's readings of Husserl will thus focus primarily on Adorno's negative dialectic and on Derrida's deconstruction of the Western philosophical tradition.

I

In 1924 the twenty-one year old Adorno submitted his dissertation on Husserl's phenomenology,[5] in which he provided an interpretation of the first volume of Husserl's *Ideas*.[6] Adorno openly expresses his indebtedness to his teacher, Hans Cornelius, and he went as far as to compare Husserl's attempt at founding a descriptive psychology with Cornelius' 1916 "transcendental systematics,"[7] only to find that Husserl's theory of thinghood inadequate.[8] Pettazzi has called this the

3. Rudolphe Gasché, "Joining the Text: From Heidegger to Derrida," *The Yale Critics: Deconstruction in America*, ed. by Jonathan Arac, et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 156-75; See also the two monographs by Hermann Mörchen, *Adorno und Heidegger: Untersuchungen einer philosophischen Kommunikationsverweigerung* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), and *Macht und Herrschaft im Denken von Heidegger und Adorno* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1980).

4. Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* (London: Verso and NLB, 1981), p. 141; Jay, *Adorno*, *op. cit.*, pp. 21ff.

5. Theodor W. Adorno, "Die Transzendenz des Dinglichen und Noematischen in Husserls Phänomenologie," in Adorno, *Schriften*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), Vol. I, pp. 7-77.

6. See Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, Trans. by W. R. Boyce Gibson (New York, 1931).

7. Adorno, "Die Transzendenz des Dinglichen," in *Schriften*, *op. cit.*Vol. I, pp. 7-77. Cf. Hans Cornelius, *Transcendentale Systematik: Untersuchungen zur Begründung der Erkenntnistheorie* (Munich: Reinhardt, 1961).

8. Adorno, *Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 11-12.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

transcendental phase in Adorno's thought,[9] where the evidence of what is immediately present functions as the last ground for evaluating all knowledge. From this viewpoint, Husserl's phenomenology appears to rest on a contradiction, since "on the one hand, he demands the grounding of all things by way of reducing them to the immediately given; on the other, he considers things to be 'absolute transcendencies' which distinguish themselves epistemologically only in their relation to consciousness, but whose proper Being is basically supposed to be independent of consciousness."[10] Adorno's analysis of Husserl's concept of thinghood criticizes the remnants of logical absolutism in phenomenology. Adorno's own presumption of conceptual unequivocality and systematic consistency, however, is never questioned, as though the mere unearthing of this contradiction in Husserl is sufficient to render phenomenology obsolete. In this Adorno follows the traditional scholarly approach, isolating conceptual problems and even proposing corrections formulated in the spirit of Cornelius' argument about the immediate present as the last ground for judgment. In his dissertation, Adorno simply assumes the possibility of a clear separation between presentation and critical commentary — a separation evident even in the way individual chapters are organized. He thus superimposes on the material an expository form derived not from the material itself but from outside it, i.e., from Adorno's own perspective.

Unlike the way he approached Husserl's philosophy in his dissertation, in *Against Epistemology*[11] Adorno rejected an external approach: "Without sacrificing contact with the subject matter and thus the obligation to argue effectively against a method designed to forego the need for argument, the question I shall broach — by means of a concrete model — is the possibility and truth of epistemology in principle. Husserl's philosophy is the occasion and not the point of this book. Thus it is not to be presented as a completed whole and then subjected to some sort of comparison"[12] The preface to *Against Epistemology* exemplifies Adorno's idiosyncratic philosophical style: the antisystematic moment with which he explores new and alternative organizational

9. Carlo Pettazzi, "La Fase Transcendentale del Pensiero di Adorno: Hans Cornelius," in *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia*, Vol. 23 (1977), p. 445.

10. Adorno, *Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 375.

11. Theodor W. Adorno, *Against Epistemology: Studies in Husserl and the Phenomenological Antinomies*, trans. by Willis Domingo (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982). This work was drafted in the 1930s while Adorno was living in England. It was first published in a substantially revised version in 1956.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 10

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

principles; the use of concrete models to contextualize abstract ideas; the refusal to share with the reader his theoretical and methodological assumptions, which are merely posited and never fully developed. Adorno looks at Husserl's philosophy — mostly his earlier writings such as the *Logical Investigations*[13] and *Ideas*, with only occasional references to later works such as *Cartesian Meditations*[14] and *Formal and Transcendental Logic*[15] — in terms of a model of a theory of knowledge. Such a methodological assumption is never really articulated.[16] This, however, is not simply a contribution to a well-established position needing no further justification. To the extent that Adorno only discusses part of Husserl's *oeuvre*, i.e., those texts published during Husserl's lifetime, he is open to the charge of ideological selectivity. Husserl's later work on *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*,[17] containing his concept of the "life-world," challenges the identification of phenomenology and epistemology which Adorno uncritically assumes. Within the context of his other work on Husserl, however, *Against Epistemology* can be rescued. The arguments in the dissertation, as well as earlier work on Husserl in the 1930s, can fill the gaps in *Against Epistemology*. Although there are stylistic differences between these texts, there is nonetheless a thematic continuity.

In the dissertation Adorno shows that "to the extent Husserl engages in epistemological reflections, they are directed at ideally ordered correlations."[18] This is what Adorno criticizes most. The main argument of his dissertation reappears in *Against Epistemology* as the foil for his newly established critical procedure. He begins by pointing out the above-mentioned contradiction, and shows that Husserl manages to confront a world transcending language and consciousness by first deriving it from a consciousness he had previously posited as the only legitimate epistemological ground.[19] How is this world constituted? Adorno points out that Husserl does not know. That Husserl simply hypostatizes this transcendental world already indicates its illegitimacy. Adorno's objection is that things themselves cannot be taken as experiences. Rather,

13. Vols. I and II, trans. by J. N. Findlay (New York: Humanities Press, 1970).
14. Trans. by Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967).
15. Trans. by Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969).
16. Adorno, *Against Epistemology*, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-25).
17. Trans. with an Introduction by aid Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970).
18. Adorno, "Die Transzendenz des Dinglichen," in *Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 18.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they portray the rules which regulate experiences and which can only be constituted in connection with a *personal consciousness*.[20] He then criticizes Husserl's distinction between Being as consciousness and Being as reality, which lies at the heart of the antinomy between "*noeses*" (i.e., those experiences which are conscious *of* something) and "*noemata*" (i.e., those things of which intentional experiences are conscious). "Since there are no transcendental things, the *noema* cannot be defined in relation to them."[21] Instead, Adorno proposes the "concept of an immanent thing-in-itself" for a phenomenology which directs itself to immediately given things. He interprets this introduction of a rational criterion for judging reality as a methodological (and thus conceptual) separation between the descriptive and normative levels of the phenomenological investigation. Such a relation between reality and reason assumes their presence in the "idea of a consciousness in which the thing is given in its originality and understood adequately." Adorno makes this charge authoritatively, accusing Husserl of logical mistakes, inconsistencies, ambiguities, and the use of obscure language. Important components of Husserl's phenomenological analysis, such as the phenomenological reduction, are dismissed as mere heuristic means to clarify the relation between consciousness and reality.

In the third chapter of *Against Epistemology* Adorno takes up similar problems. Interestingly enough, this is the only part of the book not based on his earlier draft and appearing for the first time in the 1956 edition. What he criticized in his dissertation as "mere heuristic devices" here become reified hypostatizations: "When thought shuts itself off from the division of labor, it falls behind the development of forces and behaves 'archaically.' If as a science, however, it integrates itself into the sciences, it renounces its proper impulse at the very point where it most needs it. It remains reified, a mere imitation modeled on societal categories and ultimately relations of production. This is so even when it credits itself with making scientific judgments about so-called issues of principle, such as the subject-object relation."[22] For Adorno, the relation between thing and consciousness, which Husserl still regarded as primary, becomes a product of alienation and of a process of social labor, upon which, however, his critique cannot immediately reflect. Such a reified science constitutes knowledge according to a logical classification. Adorno's critique of Husserl in the dissertation is now reformulated

21. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
22. Adorno, *Against Epistemology*, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dialectically. The thrust of his argument has changed. The young Adorno was still interested in a logical exposition and solution of problems in terms of a phenomenology understood as epistemology. In *Against Epistemology* he reads Husserl's texts from a dialectical perspective, imperially skipping over methodological reflections, although occasionally forced to come back to them. The expository approach is now replaced by an explanatory procedure which shifts its focus from the mere discussion of problems to an investigation of phenomenology *as text*.[23]

II

What is the nature of Derrida's first encounter with Husserl and phenomenology? Derrida's 1959 paper on " 'Genesis and Structure' in Husserl's Phenomenology"[24] begins by anticipating potential criticisms: "No doubt, to treat a philosophy by introducing the foreign substance of a debate may be efficacious, may surrender or set free the meaning of a latent process, but it begins with an aggression and an infidelity. We must not forget this"[25] Unlike the young Adorno, Derrida deliberately approaches his discussion of Husserl's early texts from an outside perspective and with a terminology Husserl would have rejected as inappropriate. Derrida at least asks himself whether it is legitimate to take such a point of departure, whereas Adorno never did. Derrida makes a virtue of necessity by pointing out that this procedure allows the uncovering of a latent level of meaning in Husserl's text which in retrospect legitimates such a bold interpretation. Nevertheless, he feels he must justify his approach.

Derrida develops two antithetical arguments: on the one hand, he tries to uncover certain repressed presuppositions in Husserl's (phenomeno)logical studies by locating traces of this repression in the texts themselves; on the other hand, he seems compelled to interrupt his exposition to indicate explicitly his critical intentions. These two arguments are dialectically interrelated. An examination of this dialectical critique in conjuction with Adorno's reading of Husserl provides an opportunity to trace the genesis of deconstruction. Adorno tried to exclude his own intentionality from the texts and had to return to exposition in order to obscure the methodological gaps in his argument. How does Derrida deal with this problem?

---

23. First indications of this shift can be found in his "Husserl and the Problem of Idealism," in *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 37 (1940), pp. 5-18.

24. Now in *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 154-68.

25. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In "Genesis and Structure" Derrida seeks to demonstrate how Husserl attempts to evade the conflict between the genetic and the structural approach without realizing that his phenomenological investigations are constituted by this very opposition. "Husserl, then, *ceaselessly attempts to reconcile the structuralist demand . . . with the genetic* demand. . . . One could show, perhaps, that the phenomenological project itself is born of an initial failure of this attempt."[26] Derrida wants to show how a previously excluded conflict can later become the presupposition for phenomenological discourse. He points to the fact that only on the basis of the question about the historical and semantic relations of genesis and structure can the phenomenological operation become meaningful.[27] "If Husserl has not asked these questions in terms of historical philology, if he did not first ask himself about the meaning of his operative instruments *in general*, it is not due to naiveté, dogmatic prescription, or a neglect of the historical weight of language. It is rather because to ask oneself about the meaning of the notions of structure or genesis *in general*, is to interrogate that which precedes the transcendental reduction."[28] In retrospect, Derrida's critique, which proceeds by way of the opposition of genesis and structure, turns out to be a fruitful and necessary detour.

How does this thesis about the necessity of such critical detours relate to deconstruction, which only sought to amplify the voices in a debate already present in Husserl? Derrida addresses this question in the first half of his paper, where he interrupts his presentation to outline his projected results and its procedure. As the paper develops, these interruptions become less frequent and the reader is gradually drawn into a completely different discourse. Here the discussion of Husserl's problems gives way to an entirely different voice, Derrida's own, who now talks to Husserl through the text under analysis. Here Derrida broaches themes typical of his later work, and he even touches on "*différance*," "*clôture*" and "speech as auto-affection."[29] Derrida deliberately leaves gaps in his critical commentary. Unlike the gaps in Adorno's later reading of Husserl, which refer back to his earlier reading of Husserl, Derrida's gaps point ahead to as yet unexpressed reflections.

---

26. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, *op. cit.*, p. 157.
27. See David B. Allison's dissertation, *Derrida's Critique of Husserl: The Philosophy of Presence* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 1974).
28. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, *op. cit.*, p. 167.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 161, 162 and 166. Cf. "*Différance*," in Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp. 1-27.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

These "concepts," and the attendant interpretation, speak with one voice, "which is one with Husserl himself, but speaks against the epistemological frame of his philosophy, if only hesitantly."[30] Here Derrida as the interpreter vanishes behind the expository reading. The question arises as to whether these two opposed procedures cancel each other out. If, from the beginning, Derrida's purpose was to uncover a voice which was always already present in Husserl's text, but which was buried under various layers of intentionality, then what is the function of the intentional-epistemological disclaimer at the beginning of Derrida's critique? Why is Derrida sending out early warning signals? It seems as if he has to check the temptation of forcing his own position too much into the foreground. It is this critical self-assertion, which the deconstructive method seeks to defeat: Derrida's deconstructive procedure excludes the possibility of formulating a critique of phenomenology from a discursive high-ground. Deconstruction forbids the direct, metacritical exposure of the critic's own interpretive position; it has to remain hidden within his texts and can only come to the fore indirectly by following the movement of *différance*.[31] Deconstructive criticism can only survive as a process, and it collapses whenever this dialectical movement is halted.

In Adorno's case, the genesis of his approach can be located within the space marked by two different studies of Husserl separated by roughly thirty years. The loss in clarity and self-reflection in his later work manifested itself in certain gaps in the critical procedure. Derrida's case is analogous. The difference is that the genesis of his deconstruction can be located not between two different texts, but in his movement from traditional investigation to the deconstructive methodology within the space of one and the same text.[32]

III

Both Adorno and Derrida attempt to develop a theory of the rhetorical dimension of philosophical texts, i.e., how arguments are formed, how they are expressed, and where the stylistic components undermine the text's very argument. Each sets out to identify certain ruptures in the text — fractures to be expanded to ultimately disclose the text's ideological implications. How is Husserl's development from the *Logical Investigations* to the *Crisis* to be evaluated? Is there a "turning point,"

30. See Manfred Frank, *What is Neostructuralism?*, *op. cit.*, p. 153.
31. Derrida, "*Différance*," in *Margins of Philosophy*, *op. cit.* pp. 6ff.
32. See his introduction to Edmund Husserl's *Origin of Geometry*, trans. by John P. Leavy, ed. by David B. Allison (Stony Brook: Nicolas Hays, 1978).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or does the later Husserl simply elaborate those premises already inherent in his earlier texts? Should one focus on the continuity or discontinuity between early and later work?[33] Derrida, too, has proposed a way of periodizing Husserl's works and of how to make sense out of them. He opts for the continuity thesis. Accordingly, Husserl's theory of language undergoes very little change from *Logical Investigations*.[34] He tries to show that the phenomenological critique of metaphysics was always only interested in the reinstitution of the object of its critique.[35] Derrida is not so much interested in understanding the relation between phenomenology and metaphysics as he is in portraying Husserl's approach as a *paradigmatic example* of metaphysical thought.

A similar argument can be found in Derrida's introduction to the French translation of the VIth appendix to the *Crisis*. "If *The Origin of Geometry* is distinguishable from the *Crisis*, it is not because of its descriptive novelty. Nearly all its motifs are already present in other investigations, whether they be largely prior to or almost contemporary with it"[36] Husserl's texts are indistinguishable with regard to procedure. On the contrary, the more his phenomenological position evolves, the closer his later texts come to the premises laid down in *Logical Investigations*. Derrida reiterates this assessment of Husserl's intellectual development at the beginning of his study of Husserl's theory of the sign.[37] Here he portrays Husserl as working unswervingly toward a metaphysical foundation of ideal conceptuality, whereby later works simply resolve some problems unresolved in earlier texts. Here the philosopher of *différance* simply brushes aside any and all differences in Husserl's formulation of his phenomenological project and interprets Husserl's extensive work in terms of the refinement of one single drive, i.e., the establishment of a metaphysical foundation for all knowledge. Derrida thus denies Husserl's efforts to criticize metaphysics.[38] This

33. Richard M. Zaner, "Discussion of Jacques Derrida 'The Ends of Man'," in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 32 (1972), p. 387.

34. Derrida, "Form and Meaning: A Note on the Phenomenology of Language," in *Margins of Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 162f.

35. See Rudolf Bernet, "Is the Present Ever Present: Phenomenology and the Metaphysics of Presence," in *Research in Phenomenology*, Vol. 12 (1982), pp. 85-112.

36. See "The Origin of Geometry," in *The Crisis*, *op. cit.*, pp. 353-383.

37. *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. by David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

38. See Alan White, "Reconstructing Husserl: A Critical Response to Derrida's *Speech and Phenomena*," in *Husserl Studies*, Vol. 4 (1987), pp. 45-62; Pier Aldo Rovatti, "Critical Theory and Phenomenology," in *Telos* 15 (1973), pp. 25-40; Paul Piccone, "The Crisis of One-Dimensionality," in *Telos* 35 (1978), pp. 43-54; Bernet, "Is the Present Ever Present,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

undifferentiated image of Husserlian phenomenology fits well into Derrida's overall view of Husserl as a paradigmatic metaphysical thinker.

This crude over-generalization sharply contrasts with Derrida's much subtler analysis of the metaphorical dimension of Husserl's texts. "The discourse on the *logic* of the discourse is entangled in a play of metaphors."[39] According to Derrida, it is precisely this metaphorical moment which disrupts the logical coherence of Husserl's text. He fixes on Husserl's metaphors of interweaving, mirroring, and layering to expose how the physical aspect of language turns against content and to show the extent to which the phenomenological reduction is itself forced to use this expressive material layer of language. His deconstruction of Husserl's metaphors of "the layer" and of "interweaving" exemplifies the artful grafting Derrida employs to integrate the conflicting features of Husserl's work into his commentary: "The word *Verwebung* refers to this metaphorical zone. The 'strata' are 'woven,' their intercomplication is such that the warp cannot be distinguished from the woof. If the stratum of the logos were simply *founded* one could extract it and bring to light its underlying stratum of nonexpressive acts and contents. But since this superstructure acts back upon its *Unterschicht* in an essential and decisive manner, one is indeed obliged, from the very outset of the description, to associate a properly *textual* metaphor with the geological metaphor: for cloth means *text*, *Verweben* here means *texere*."[40]

Derrida also applies deconstruction to his interpretation of Husserl's theory of the sign. He analyzes Husserl's distinction between expression and indication, where expression is taken as the sole basis for meaningful communication and scientific logic. "The delineation of the logical *a priori* within the general *a priori* of language does not set apart a region; rather it designates, as we shall see, the dignity of a *telos*, the purity of a norm, and the essence of a designation"[41] Derrida is then able to show how the logical underpinning of Husserl's investigations depends on particular metaphorical images which evoke the notion of presencing. On the basis of this, Husserl's investigations are subsumed under one global category and accused of attempting to restore metaphysics —

---

op. cit., pp. 109ff.; Bernhard P. Dannenhauer, "On Speech and Temporality: Jacques Derrida and Edmund Husserl," in *Philosophy Today*, Vol. 18 (1974), pp. 171-80.

39. Derrida, "Form and Meaning: A Note on the Phenomenology of Language," in *Margins of Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

41. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a reproach which is then indiscriminately directed at all of Husserl's texts. Derrida no longer distinguishes among individual texts, but rather between different discursive layers which are uniformly present in all of Husserl's texts. He presents this argument, however, in a strictly logical form, as if to suggest the need to substitute his own logic for Husserl's own.[42] He structures his deconstruction of Husserl in the strict logic of "if . . . then" syllogisms that call attention to what Husserl found necessary to exclude. These exclusions are then invariably re-interpreted as the very presuppositions for Husserl's phenomenology. This maneuver is consistent with Derrida's desire to describe all of Husserl's texts as paradigmatic of the metaphysical tradition, irrespective of what they advance. The result of such an all-encompassing "deconstructive" procedure is predictable, since its methodological means serve merely to confirm its projected objectives: all differences in Husserl's philosophy are reduced to the one conclusion that it is always Husserl's unspoken intention to reinstate or re-certify a metaphysical conception of the sign.

Derrida's critique of Husserl's conception of a consciousness independent of language — a critique prefigured by Adorno's dissertation — is now presented in terms of an analysis of the metaphors of presence and instantaneity: "There is a duration to the blink, and it closes the eye. This alterity is in fact the condition for presence, and thus for *Vorstellung* in general; it precedes all the dissociations that could be produced in presence, in *Vorstellung*."[43] According to Derrida, Husserl ignores the fact that expression implies the communication of meaning, and he goes on to discuss the example of internal monologue which is supposed to occur in a single "instant." In the case of internal monologue, the meaning (*Sinn*) and the signification (*Bedeutung*) of speech are projected as immediately and instantaneously co-present. Here one should be able to bracket those mediating processes which constitute all other communicative situations. But, as Derrida demonstrates, this example is inconsistent with Husserl's own analysis of time. Moreover, Husserl's conception of the immediately present is itself dependent on the possibility of its mediation through language.

How can these inconsistencies in Husserl's thought be explained? Derrida's answer is that they are symptoms of Husserl's refusal to problematize his conception of life and consciousness as immediate self-presence, as living present. At this point, however, Derrida's account

42. See Joseph Smith, "Derrida's Husserl Interpretation: Text and Commentary," in *Philosophy Today*, Vol. 11 (1967).

43. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turns into a paraphrase of Husserl's texts that flattens into simple textual commentary. The object of his critique is thereby filtered through the interpreter's voice, who gives the impression that he is merely providing an objective report on the interpreted text, rather than constructing a critical intrusion. The history of philosophy is thus no longer conceived as the history of ideas or philosophical problems, or even as a succession of epistemological breaks. Rather, it is dissolved into an intertextual interpretive practice which is in principle infinite.[44]

Parallel to the change from philosophical interpretation to deconstructive commentary, Derrida's critique of Husserl's theory of the sign expresses a growing interest in the textual structure of Husserl's mode of philosophizing. Whereas he established his criticism of the expression/indication distinction by means of a traditional analytical procedure, deconstructive elements are gradually introduced into his readings so that commentary is replaced by a new text, or rather a network of texts, which in turn produce further commentary. This new critical texture, the deconstructed "text" containing deconstructed "concepts," thus locates itself *beyond* any distinction between the (commented) text and its (textual) commentary. Such an intertextual dissolution of philosophy, however, makes the relation between author and the "authored" text problematic. In an interview with Henri Ronse, Derrida argued that: "[*Speech and Phenomena*] is perhaps the essay which I like most. Doubtless I could have bound it as a long footnote to one or the other two works [*Of Grammatology* and *Writing and Difference*]. . . . The essay which asks these questions can also be read as the other side (recto or verso, as you wish) of another essay, published in 1962, as the introduction to Husserl's *The Origin of Geometry*."[45] In a similar vein, in the introduction to *Against Epistemology* Adorno points out that he wants to focus on the "complex thicket" of Husserl's texts, and that he intends to hold the problems of this complex textuality up against the authorial intentionality of the text. He then closely scrutinizes the rhetorical element in Husserl's theory.

Husserl's distinction in the first volume of *Logical Investigations* between narrative logic and historical research in the human sciences, in which pure phenomenology takes up the function of providing "philosophical purification" for pure logic, calls forth the following remarks:

---

44. See Hugh Silverman, "Self-Decentering: Derrida Incorporated," in *Research in Phenomenology*, Vol. 8 (1978), pp. 45-46.

45. Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 4-5.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Sentences of this sort [which attempt to found Logic as normative science performatively] appear at the outset of far-reaching theoretical discussions as plausible and even indifferently self-evident. But they hide what remains to be proved."[46] Here Adorno returns to an earlier observation about the textual structure of Husserl's work, integrating it into his critique of Husserl's assertion that phenomenological research is presuppositionless. He thus reads Husserl's syntax as a symptom for the attempt to achieve conceptual mastery over the material. Thus he attributes to Husserl's use of language a latent social meaning. This allows Adorno to relate individual observations about textual structure and linguistic practices, and the social function of phenomenology as epistemology, which is the goal of his critique. He objects to Husserl's metaphor of the machine to describe thought processes: "The machine is not thought-machine, it understands neither itself nor the meaning of its performances. But our own thought-machine might very well function similarly, except that the real course of one kind of thought would always have to be recognized as correct by the insight brought forward in another."[47] Here Husserl is referring to what he calls the fundamental and always irreconcilable difference between ideal and real law. It is precisely this point which unleashes Adorno's biting commentary: "Yet even the hypothetical 'possible' at a central point in the argument must have puzzled the phenomenologist, who promised to abide purely by 'the things themselves.' But, above all, the subject of the argumentation does not subsist out of several 'thinkings' — the linguistic impossibility of a plural for 'thinking' indicates a factual impossibility."[48] He closes this section by claiming that "Husserl's theory of a breach can itself be breached."[49]

The rhetorical moment of Husserl's proof betrays a conceptual problem; Husserl has to hypostatize a thought as unified whole — a conception Adorno then subjects to a dialectical critique. Adorno is thus not satisfied simply with the recognition of phenomenology's metaphysical foundation: he insists on moving beyond this mere assertion to its critical interpretation. "The metaphysical conception which characterized the beginning of the era appeared in the end as most exceedingly sublimated and disabused. As a result, however, it just appeared all the more unavoidable and consistent, naked and bare: The development of

46. Adorno, *Against Epistemology*, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
47. *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
49. *Ibid.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a doctrine of Being under the conditions of nominalism and the reduction of concepts to the thinking subject."[50] Adorno's criticism is directed at a phenomenological doctrine which understands itself in terms of the paradoxical practice of the mediation of what cannot be mediated. With this, phenomenology becomes a manifestation of bourgeois thinking resigned to the real and the given, satisfied with the mere (and uncritical) reproduction of what is. Derrida did not dare to draw such a radical conclusion from his otherwise parallel analysis.

Adorno's interest in the rhetorical mediation of thought is motivated by his thesis that all texts are structured around their own internal dialectic. This is what he seeks to elucidate in *Against Epistemology*. The same is true of Derrida: the interpretive practice of uncovering contradictions is grounded in his specific theory of language. Both Adorno and Derrida criticize Husserl's abjuration of the material side of language, interpreting this repudiation as symptomatic for the fact "that the sensuousness claimed for thought has no consequence in the philosophical structure."[51] Moreover, Adorno is of the opinion that reflection on precisely this point will permit thought to approach critique. The fact that his critique makes up for Husserl's own failing gives rise to the following remark about the progressive and regressive moments in Husserl's text: "Those are advanced in which thought 'means beyond itself' under the compulsion of its contradictions . . . falling into aporia which can no longer be avoided unless the idealistic beginning itself were abandoned. Husserl takes on repressive features as soon as he presents the aporia as positive determinations and hypostatizes the subjective stage [*Instanz*] as immanence to consciousness as well as the essentiality the fact-free concept."[52]

What distinguishes such "demonstrative" critique from "deconstruction" is the former's historical context, whereby Adorno can still distinguish between progressive and regressive moments. Derrida renounces this possibility. Adorno's interpretation of Husserl demonstrates that critique is only possible as *determined* negation. While he is cautious when it comes to a positive characterization of what follows when criticism turns into practice, at no point does he lose sight of the context from which his critical project derives the pathos of necessity. Derrida's decentered discourse does not have this potential: he explicitly refuses to ground his interpretation in any position which might legitimate it.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IV

How can these two readings of Husserl's philosophy be evaluated? What can they learn from each other? Are they in any way compatible? Why do both Adorno and Derrida return to Husserl with such persistence, especially in the early stages of their careers? This alone raises the suspicion that both authors are waging a secret campaign against something not immediately addressed in their critical analyses. In this context one might point to the institutionalization of phenomenology as an academic philosophy when both Adorno and Derrida sought to establish their own philosophical pursuits (Husserl and Heidegger in Germany; Lévinas and Sartre in France) and against which their own theoretical positions must assert their validity.[53] If this were the case, it would throw a different light on their readings of Husserl, since each independently interprets phenomenology as paradigmatic for a discourse of (institutional) power which it is their mission to subvert. One may postulate more directly philosophical (although no less subjectively motivated) reasons for the compatibility of Adorno's and Derrida's readings of Husserl.

One possible explanation is to view Husserl's phenomenological analyses as necessary precursors to Derrida's *différance* and Adorno's concept of the nonidentical, and thus to interpret their critiques in terms of an "anxiety of influence." Lawler has advanced this hypothesis in relation to Derrida's critique of Husserl's concepts of time and space. According to him, Husserl's concept of space-thing constitution paved the way for Derrida's deconstruction of Husserl's opposition of spatiality and temporality. "Thus, this nonpresence inscribed in Husserl's notion of the transcendental spatial thing 'produces' differences and yet never presents itself. . . Derrida attempts to shift the discussion away from temporality, though, through a reinscribed concept of spatiality, a concept of spatiality inscribed with nonpresence, spacing, difference. Derrida's emphasis on space allows one to see Husserl as his precursor."[54] In support of this claim, one could interpret Husserl's concept of a rupture within the living present by the flow of internal time-consciousness as a significant step in the direction of Derrida's notion of *différance*, which assumes that every constitution of consciousness is always already ruptured. Where the relation between Adorno

53. Cf. Adorno's critique of Heidegger, "Thesen über die Sprache des Philosophen," in *Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 366-71 and his *Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. by Kent Tarnowski and Frederic Will (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

54. Leonard Lawler, "Temporality and Spatiality: A Note to a Footnote in Derrida's Writing and Difference," in *Research in Phenomenology*, Vol. 12 (1982), pp. 162-63.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Adorno and Husserl is concerned, one could show how Adorno consistently dialecticizes Husserl's antinomies.[55] It may be fruitful to study the connections between dialectical thought and phenomenological practice, especially since the latter had a formative influence on Adorno's non-hierarchical philosophical procedure. That phenomenology does not always live up to its own ideal is, after all, the basis of Adorno's critique of phenomenological antinomies.

In this connection it should be possible to turn the tables and criticize Adorno and/or Derrida from Husserl's viewpoint and that of a phenomenologically based dialectic. Boly has formulated such a critique of Derrida from the standpoint of phenomenology and thereby stumbled upon the weakest element in deconstructive theory, i.e., its uncritical identification of formally organized structures with closed systems.[56] It ought to be possible to formulate a critique of Adorno's and Derrida's interpretations of Husserl without approaching them externally or, obversely, identifying too closely with them.

Boly first points to the dialogical nature of the relation between the eidetic and the transcendental reduction — an issue which both Adorno and Derrida downplay in their readings of Husserl. "Eidetic and transcendental phases work together, as inseparable antagonists within a continuous dialectic of disclosure. Because these two phases oppose one another, reduction involves a continuous interplay between energy and order, dynamism and system, with the result that it tirelessly traces patterns in the life-world, yet does so only to modify and transform those patterns through the very act of its tracing."[57] He then asks whether it is possible to develop a model of intentionality which provides regulation, but without necessarily representing a closed system. Is it possible to develop a theory that mediates between the position which explains meaning as deriving from the life-world and that which attributes meaning only to subjective intentionality? Both Adorno and Derrida attempt to work toward precisely such a theory. In both cases, they are concerned with the *differentiation* and *multiplication* of meaning; and both are extremely critical of models which reduce signification to a single element. What needs to be resolved is how Adorno's nonidentical

55. See for example, Donn Welton, "Structure and Genesis in Husserl's Phenomenology," in *Husserl: Expositions and Reappraisals*, ed. by Frederick A. Elliston and Peter McCormick (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), pp. 57ff.

56. See John Boly, "Nihilism Aside: Derrida's Debate over Intentional Models," in *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol. 9 (1985), pp. 154ff.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and Derrida's *différance* can be integrated into such an open theory of intentionality. What does the theory of *différance* have to offer that will help rewrite the ultimate grounding of meaning and consciousness in the transcendental ego as a motivated constitution on the ground of differentiality? As Frank points out, Derrida's expression "the transcendentality of difference" refers to an element which in itself is not conscious, but which might yet serve as the presupposition for consciousness and knowledge.[58] Unfortunately, both Derrida's theory of differance and Adorno's negative dialectic, as these authors' interpretations of Husserl paradigmatically demonstrate, revert to such moments of identity-logical reductionism when they approach their critical object too globally and thus impoverish its individuality by restricting it to paradigmatic features.

Cousins has compared this effect with a machine able to produce an infinite number of identical and preprogrammed interpretations.[59] Strasser has also called attention to this one-dimensional tendency which, in spite of the commanding and elegant style of deconstruction, simply cannot be overlooked.[60] For Derrida, any closed structure is also necessarily metaphysical, and this means that it is organized around a regulative idea. According to Boly, however, we can trace this over-simplification back to Derrida's uncritical reception of Saussure's model of language.[61] Derrida translated Husserl's analysis of the phenomenological experience into linguistic terminology, thereby short-circuiting the dialectic between the eidetic and the transcendental phases of phenomenological reduction by autonomizing the initial phase and hypostatizing it as an infinite process. Boly is able to show, however, that such an absolute concept of the eidetic phase of the phenomenological reduction as indefinite play of differences in fact works against the constitution of meaning and signification. What remains is nothing but a mere strategy of reduction: the dialectical horizon vanishes before the interpretation even begins.[62] An elaboration of the transcendental phase of the reduction, however, could bring back this

58. See Frank, *What is Neostructuralism?*, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

59. Mark Cousins, "The Logic of Deconstruction," in *Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 3 (1978), p. 76.

60. Stephan Strasser, "Von einer Husserl-Interpretation zu einer Husserl-Kritik: Nachdenkliches zu Jacques Derridas Denkweg," in *Studien zur neueren französischen Phänomenologie: Ricoeur, Foucault, Derrida*, ed. by Ernst Wolfgang Orth (Freiburg and Munich: Karl Albert, 1986), pp. 136ff.

61. See Boly, "Nihilism Aside," *op. cit.*, p. 155.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

horizon of interpretation, which would not necessarily have to result in a return to the closed metaphysical system. Frank has convincingly deployed this argument against deconstruction, insisting on the need for an "archaeology of the individual" to establish a foundation for an open interpretive practice.[63]

Husserl provided the groundwork for such a theory of the constitution of meaning in his elaboration of the life-world both as the philosophical category for a concrete interpretive activity and as the horizon of an intersubjective praxis. "Thus in any case, for the sake of clarifying this and all other acquisitions of human activity, the concrete life-world must first be taken into consideration; and it must be considered in terms of the truly concrete universality whereby it embraces, both directly and in the manner of horizons, all the built-up levels of validity acquired by men for the world of their common life and whereby it has the totality of these levels related in the end to a world-nucleus to be distilled by abstraction, namely, the world of straightforward intersubjective experiences."[64] It may seem ironic that those critical voices which decry Derrida's hostility toward interpretation come from the direction of hermeneutics. Derrida did not want to admit the possibility of interpreting Husserl's phenomenology as an open practice of multiplying meaning, and his reading of Husserl displays this prejudice at those points where his own critique gravitates toward closed-minded universalizations.

In Adorno's case, one can also discern the tendency to reduce Husserl's work to bourgeois thought "which seeks to sublimate into ontology" what is historically produced and mediated by labor.[65] He is likewise very quick to draw a parallel between Husserl and those fellow travelers of totalitarianism who despised all individuality. Adorno's reading of Husserl in no way lives up to the subtle and multi-faceted analysis of artworks which characterizes his aesthetic theory. But there is a decisive difference between Derrida's deconstruction of Husserl's metaphoricity and Adorno's critical reading of Husserl. In contradistinction to Derrida, Adorno does not reproach Husserl for constructing a theory of meaning and intentionality *in general*; rather, he simply objects that Husserl represents *the wrong theory* of meaning and

63. Frank, *What is Neostructuralism?*, *op. cit.*, p. 447; see also Fredric V. Bogel, "The Logic of Derrida's Difference," in *Centrum*, Vol. 6 (1978), pp. 55f.

64. Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. by David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 133.

65. Adorno, *Against Epistemologyu*, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intentionality — one grounded in transcendental subjectivity. That argument is completely different from Derrida's. But even he is unwilling to grant that Husserl's theory could be revised and rewritten so as to ne able to successfully integrate the nonidentical. Like Derrida, Adorno also only picks out certain moments of Husserl's phenomenology in order to attack the entire theory.

Adorno's understanding of the nonidentical can be fused with a hermeneutically based model of meaning attribution. It is interesting to note that the nonidentical — as opposed to *différance* — is not conceived as an infinite play of differences, but rather as a dialectical process which mediates between the poles of identity and nonidentity. To suppress one pole means forever to forego the possibility of a synthesis. The thought of the nonidentical has to be located in this dialectical play between identity and nonidentity, between spirit and nature. *Différance*, by contrast amorphously distorts this dialectical process. Adorno may be closer to a hermeneutical reconstruction of meaning constitution in the form of the multiplication of meaning than he himself admits. The dialectical process of identity and nonidentity cannot simply be dissolved in an infinite movement of negation. Rather, it has to be mediated through interpretation, i.e., by the labor of thought; and it is this labor which certifies the dialectical quality of philosophy and from which its self-understanding as critique derives. A theory of infinite negation obscures precisely this aspect of the historically mediated nature of philosophy by dissolving the tension between the undissolved layers of the nonidentical and the identical integration of particularity into an integrally structured totality, and by thereby ontologizing the entire problem.

U.S. Postal Service. Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation. 1. Title of publication: Telos. A. Publication no. 10770. 2. Date of filing: October 15, 1990. Frequency of issue: quarterly. A. No. of issues published annually: 4. B. Annual subscription price: $70.00. 4. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: 431 East 12th Street, New York, NY 10009. 5. Complete mailing of the headquarters or general business offices of the publishers: same. 6. Full names and complete mailing addresses of publisher, editor and managing editor: Publisher, Paul Piccone, 431 E. 12th Street, NY 10009. Editor, Paul Piccone, 431 E. 12th Street, New York, NY 10009. Managing Editor, Kerry Milliron, 431 East 12th Street, New York, NY 10009. 7. Owner: Paul Piccone, 431 East 12th Street, New York, NY 10009. 8. Known Bondholders: none. 10. Extent and nature of circulation: first number in each category is average number of copies each issue during the preceding 12 months; second number is the actual number of copies of the single issue published nearest to filing date. A. Total no. copies: 3000, 3000. B. Paid circulation. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales: 1000, 952. 2. Mail subscriptions: 1100, 1085. C. Total paid circulation: 2100, 2037. D. Free distribution by mail, carrier or other means; samples, complimentary, and other free copies: 40, 42. E. Total distribution (sum of C and D): 2140, 2079. F. Copies not distributed: Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing: 860, 921. 2. Return from news agents: none, none. G. Total (sum of E, F1 and F2): 3000, 3000. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. (signed) Paul Piccone, publisher.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Philosophic Discourses from MIT

Original in Paperback

BEING-IN-THE WORLD
A Commentary on Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Division I

Hubert L. Dreyfus

"... The fruit of 25 years of teaching the subject at Berkeley, this book is undoubtedly one of the clearest accounts of Heidegger's thought to date."— *Anthony Gottlieb, New York Times Book Review*

Being-in-the-World is a guide to one of the most influential philosophical works of this century: Division I of Part One of *Being and Time*, where Martin Heidegger works out an original and powerful account of being-in-the-world which he then uses to ground a profound critique of traditional ontology and epistemology. Hubert Dreyfus's commentary opens the way for a new appreciation of this difficult philosopher, revealing a rigorous and illuminating vocabulary that is indispensable for talking about the phenomenon of world.

316 pp. $30.00 cloth $15.95 paper

HERMENEUTICS AND CRITICAL THEORY IN ETHICS AND POLITICS

edited by Michael Kelly

These twelve essays examine the usefulness, objectivity, and range of applicability of interpretive methods in ethics and politics, with the goal of isolating the role of methodology to allow debate to focus on substantive conflicts.

304 pp. $27.50 cloth $13.95 paper

UNIVERSALISM VS. COMMUNITARIANISM
Contemporary Debates in Ethics

edited by David Rasmussen

Universalism vs. Communitarianism focuses on the question of whether ethical norms are best derived and justified on the basis of universal or communitarian standards. It is unique in representing both Continental and American points of view and both the older and a younger generation of scholars.

264 pp. $27.50 cloth $13.95 paper

THE COMMUNICATIVE ETHICS CONTROVERSY

edited by Seyla Benhabib and Fred Dallmayr

This timely reader in moral philosophy addresses a controversy on the relevance of ethics for theories of democratic institutions and democratic legitimacy. *The Communicative Ethics Controversy* illustrates philosophical dialogue in action, moving from theses to counter-arguments to rejoinders.

300 pp. $35.00 cloth $15.95 paper

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now Available in Paperback

FATE AND UTOPIA IN GERMAN SOCIOLOGY

Harry Liebersohn

"Liebershohn's book provides us with a new and suggestive scenario for the main problems of modernity. Neither tragic nor apocalyptic, it is the drama of German sociology from Tönnes to Lukács with an uncertain ending..."— *Laura Boella, Professor of Moral Philosophy, University of Milan*

246 pp. $12.95

WEBER AND RICKERT
Concept Formation in the Social Sciences

Guy Oakes

"[Oake's] contention that Weber's methodology is logically dependent on Rickert's value philosophy, that Rickert cannot solve the problem of the objectivity of values, and that Weber's methodology therefore fails...elevates the discussion to a new level."— *Wolfgang Schluchter, Institut für Soziologie der Universität Heidelberg*

208 pp. $9.95

FUTURES PAST
On the Semantics of Historical Time

Reinhart Koselleck
translated by Keith Tribe

"Koselleck turns the procedures of 'conceptual historiography' to the study of the concept of history itself, (providing) original, erudite, and illuminating insights into concepts that have informed the modern idea of historical being: event, chance, progress, revolution, modernity..."
— *Hayden White, American Historical Review*

360 pp. $12.95

ON THE LOGIC OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Jürgen Habermas
translated by Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jerry A. Stark

"This book offers a penetrating overview of many of the key problems in the social sciences and develops, as is well known, an original resolution of these. The book is of great significance."— *David Held, Polity Press*

240 pp. $12.50

To order call toll-free **1-800-356-0343 or (617) 625-8569**
Fax orders: (617) 625-6660 MasterCard and Visa accepted.

The MIT Press, 55 Hayward Street, Cambridge, MA 02142

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now published by
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Now in its 31st volume **SCREEN** continues to be the major British and international journal dedicated to the advanced study of film and television. It continues to be innovatory, informative and provocative, playing a central role in the development of film, television and cultural theory.

Appearing in 1990

Teresa de Lauretis on Women's Films of the Eighties
Steve Neale on New Approaches to Genre
Geoffrey Nowell-Smith on Problems of Film and History
Charlotte Brunsden on Quality, Value and Deregulation
Colin MacCabe on Film Production and Europe
Andrew Ross Ballots, Bullets, or Batmen: can cultural studies do the right thing?
plus review-articles of recent books on television studies, on film music, and on female spectatorship

Future issues

Mary Beth Haralovich on Proletarian Women's Films of the 'Thirties'
Barbara Creed on 'Phallic Panic'
Ravi Vasudevan reviewing new books on Indian Cinema

Subscription rates Volume 31, 1990
Institutions: UK£32.00, EEC £38.00, N.America US$72.00, elsewhere £40.00
Individuals: UK £18.00, EEC £21.00, N.America US$41.00, elsewhere £23.00
Special rates for students and unemployed on request

To subscribe, obtain further information or a *free* sample copy please write to: Journals Marketing Department, Oxford University Press, Pinkhill House, Southfield Road, Eynsham, Oxford OX8 1JJ

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Dialectic of Powerlessness: Black Identity Culture and Affirmative Action

Kevin Mattson

The young, disgruntled artist facing a hostile, reified art world is a fixture in modern society. This type bemoans a cynical world in which everything boils down to the right connections and the destruction of one's identity. The patron system of galleries and government sponsors — especially the "censoring" N.E.A.[1] — are classic objects of derision at artistic gatherings. This attitude is encapsulated in the jaded world of the culture industry. The market for one's own product must be assured from the start.[2] If the academic debate on "postmodern aesthetics" has established anything, it is that no standards exist by which to argue that one's artwork deserves the emperor's appreciation more than others. As the culture industry moves away from its 1950s "Americanization" patterns — the "Father Knows Best" period of homogenizing conformity described in David Riesman and Herbert Marcuse's work — "anything goes" becomes as much a banal cliché as an advertisement for pseudo-rebellion.[3]

Young black artists face even more difficult circumstances, for they confront a

1. The actual objection of Jesse Helms, *et. al.* does not involve censorship, for it simply states that the government will not fund "pornographic" art. This does *not* mean that the government will censor this art — it will simply not fund it. Unaddressed in any of these discussions is the question of whether the government should fund art at all, and to what extent such funding may stifle art as such.

2. Max Horkheimer wrote in the early period of the culture industry: "The economic necessity for rapid return of the considerable capital invested in each [motion picture] forbids the pursuit of the inherent logic of each work of art — of its own autonomous necessity." *Critical Theory* (New York: Continuum, 1972), p. 288

3. As Russell Berman writes: "Today the culture industry flaunts the outrageous and the abnormal. . . . In contrast to the golden age of Hollywood with its unwrinkled uniformity, contemporary commercial culture generates an artificial alterity: as entertainment, as a show of pluralism, and as an effort to counteract the deadly sameness that advanced capitalism constantly produces. This internal diversification of the culture industry corresponds to an external flexibility; no longer directed largely toward white America. . . , it has penetrated the black subculture and quickly coopted indigenous cultural forms: rap music, break dance." *Modern Culture and Critical Theory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. 89.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

particularly problematic cultural-political configuration. One aspect is the proliferation of the politics of victimization due to the shift from the integrationist-universalist strategy of the civil rights movement to the particularistic strategy of affirmative action. In the latter, the legacy of black history, oppression and victimization legitimate compensatory administrative policies. While blacks have historically been victims, this does not attend to the uglier side of affirmative action's stress on victimization which, in many ways, reproduces powerlessness.

The particularism of affirmative action strategies and the culture industry's celebration of diversity coincide. This diversity allows for expanded consumer choice in an age of pluralist identity, and it correlates with a notion of true, unhomogenized self-expression: e.g., the rap band NWA (Niggers With Attitudes) celebrates Los Angeles gang culture and has a song and video entitled "Express Yourself" (as does Madonna). The culture industry's new stress on diversity — part of capitalism's move into post-Fordist flexible accumulation and the "yuppie revolution" in personalized consumption — makes the post-modern fetish of "otherness" and "non-identity" seem banal. The particularism in both cultural institutions and in culture as such creates a new set of problems for young black artists and black identity.

Rap music is postmodern art *par excellence*. It relies on media generated sounds which are then combined, through high technology and tape loops, into a *pastiche* type of music with a grinding beat.[4] Rap is inherently about the second order "reality" of media generation: simulacra. Consider the group "Public Enemy." It is a young rap band which uses rap to explore black identity, politics, and "racism."[5] In many ways they see themselves as the heirs of the militant black power movements of the 1960s. Yet their own choice of expression— the culture industry and "style" — shows a distinct shift in the way black identity is forged. Whereas Malcolm X constituted his identity through everyday struggles, and the Black Panthers devoted much of their time to community programs, Public Enemy's self-constitution as a group comes *solely* through the culture industry. This identity is constructed through picking at scraps of media generated noises, thus avoiding the tradition they uncritically carry on. And they take up the tradition of black protest not as politics but as style.[6]

Public Enemy constitutes itself through the media's constitution of the group. As the opening lines of their album, "It Takes a Nation of Millions to

4. Rap music originated as an indigenous ghetto expression in the local disc jockey scene. At first, d.j.'s would say a few things when they spun records. Eventually the d.j. incorporated his "rap" into public shows.

5. This can be seen in their logo of a black man caught in the site of a gun and in their various songs about black power which include "Prophets of Rage," "Rebel without a Pause," "Brothers Gonna Work It Out," etc. Their song, "Fight the Power," featured in Spike Lee's movie, "Do the Right Thing," became a quasi-anthem for politicized youth.

6. Rap severely limits any move beyond style. It is based on a culture of dance and "style" (i.e., the right clothes, etc.), and it stresses rhyming quickly so as to promote the lead rapper's personality.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hold Us Back" state: "Once again, back is the incredible D, Public Enemy Number One." Public Enemy is "back" — i.e., in existence — due to their spectacularization within the media spotlight. This privileging of the media and its politics of style in one's own constitution validates the media's power and disarms one's power to autonomously define identity.[7] Public Enemy even tends to degenerate into complete affirmation of the culture industry: "PE, Crazy PE— makin' crazy loowies for the shoppin spree" (From, "It Takes a Nation of Millions . . ."). Their postmodern militance, imbibing in a strange simulacrum of resistance and the creation of "style" and signs of black identity, has little connection to any organic "black community."[8]

Public Enemy has created a controversy which helps promote its products.[9] The poverty of its response to these controversies illustrates the black artists' new quandary. The strategy of victimization is reflected in their song, "Don't Believe the Hype," where Public Enemy postures as a victim of the press, as rebels treated harshly by the media which cannot understand black heroes like Louis Farrakkhan and themselves.[10] This fits in perfectly with the postmodern notion of otherness in which the other cannot be conceptualized by a homogenizing — read "white"— logic. This politics of victimization becomes extreme in Public Enemy's response to charges of anti-Semitism. Instead

7. This simulacrum of rebellion can also be seen in the *reception* of this message. One recent urban phenomenon is young people in cars blasting extremely loud rap music (often huge speakers are placed in the trunk so that the music broadcasts to the whole neighborhood). This is "pseudo-individualization" (Adorno), where the truth being broadcast is not that this human being is an important individual due to the volume of his radio, but that the individual is merely an appendage to the technology deployed. Without music (which anyone can acquire), the individual would be nothing, and thus the reception becomes a thin mask for powerlessness.

8. Black style revolves around the expropriation of political leaders and turning them into signs deprived of their historical meaning. As Joe Wood put it, "Malcolm's image provides a stretched out, nationalist umbrella for us all. [One t-shirt which represents this nationalism pictures] Malcolm with an AK-47 and the words 'By Any Means Necessary'; on the back, the pronouncement, 'It's a Black Thing! You wouldn't understand.' Never mind the fact that Malcolm purchased the gun to defend himself from black Muslim attack — just check out the message. . . . The 'you' on back is clearly white folk, who are being told that they are not a part of the club because the club is black. So the shirt's the badge. Of blackness. . . . Flash the Malcolm memory and you're as proudly black as the impoverished and angry 20-year old sister with a fifth-grade education and a baby with a hightop fade in her arms." Joe Wood, "Looking for Malcolm (The Man and the Meaning Behind the Icon)" in *The Village Voice* (May 29, 1990), p. 43.

9. The major controversy was around band member Professor Griff remarking that Jews were to blame for slavery and were wealthy controllers over the jewelry trade. See R.J. Smith, "The Enemy Within" in *The Village Voice* (June 20, 1989), pp. 102-103.

10. Here Public Enemy raps: "The minute they see me, fear me/I'm the epitome — a public enemy/Used, abused without clues . . ./They even had it on the news/Don't believe the hype." And: "The follower of Farrakhan/Don't tell me you understand/ Until you see the man . . ./Cause I'm mad, plus I'm the enemy/They can't c'mon and play me in primetime/Cause I know the time, plus I'm gettin' mine . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of dealing with Black-Jewish relations, they resort to the worst victimization politics: "Crucifixion ain't no fiction, So-called chosen, frozen, Apology made to whoever pleases, Still they got me like Jesus." Here they come off as both melodramatic and megalomaniac. More importantly, the status of victim is instrumentalized to assert that the band need not take control over their own cultural politics (since they are victims, not actors) and that those who attack them are inherently crucifiers and racists.

Issues of cultural particularism have been injected into the debate around the politics of rap music by others.[11] This can be seen in the Reverend Al Sharpton's coming to the aid of Public Enemy.[12] Similarly, Tom Wicker has spoken of a "fear of difference" in the condemnation of the lyrics of 2 Live Crew as obscene — another rap band. 2 Live Crew's lyrics, which deal with sex in a blunt way and are clearly sexist, are seen by Wicker as "quintessentially black."[13] Henry Louis Gates Jr., who considers it his duty to defend affirmative action as well as write postmodernist literary theory, has raised 2 Live Crew's rap music to the abstract level of "black culture" which is allegedly often misunderstood by others.[14] Here "authentic" black expression and black culture are reified as being sexually explicit and incomprehensible to "mainstream" thought. The "other" is presented as if this is the only way it can speak. But, as Michelle Moodly-Adams pointed out in *The New York Times* later, such particularism is itself a form of racism. Her comments about Wicker apply to Gates as well: "What . . . good white liberals like Mr. Wicker are endorsing is the vicious myth that black people are the embodiment of irresponsible and unrestrained sexuality. [This] very myth has been used for four centuries to underwrite slavery, the lynching of black men and the sexual abuse of black women."[15] The reification of black culture and otherness has questionable implications for the status of black identity.

The Sharptons and the Gates signal a crisis within the civil rights movement. Whereas the early civil rights movement projected a vision of inclusion through the abolition of segregation, a new strategy developed beginning with

11. See *Newsweek* (March 19, 1990).

12. Cf. R.J. Smith, "Public Enemy Quits?" in *The Village Voice* (July 4, 1989), p. 88.

13. Tom Wicker, "Home of the Brave?" in *The New York Times* (June 14, 1990), p. A27.

14. Henry Louis Gates Jr., "2 Live Crew, Decoded" in *The New York Times* (June 19, 1990), p. A23.

15. Michelle Moody-Adams, "Don't Confuse 2 Live Crew With Black Culture" in *The New York Times* (June 25, 1990), p. A16. Moody-Adams goes on to write: "[T]he self-proclaimed guardians of black consciousness — and the white lawyers making money from black performers — try to convince us that every song or stage act performed by a black person is a representation of some one monolithic thing called black culture. . . . This is not only dismaying but also dangerous, because it indulges the crippling belief that even the most morally repugnant behavior by a black person must be embraced as part of black culture. This means no black person can ever criticize any other black person's conduct without being called . . . an 'Uncle Tom.' Such an attitude, sad to say, is as oppressive as the racism it purports to fight."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Black Power in the 1960s. As substantive issues became more important than the formal rights the civil rights movement had won, black particularism took center stage as a political strategy, rather than the assertion of a stronger universalism and emphasis on economic issues. Stressing the particular oppression and victimization of blacks, the notion of equal rights was replaced by compensatory justice — codified in the quota system of hiring known today as affirmative action. Such a movement parallels the general move within the state from the universalist, class-based, and quasi-social democratic corporatism of the New Deal to the "race issue" of the Great Society and Affirmative Action.

Spike Lee's film, "Do the Right Thing," grapples with this crisis and depicts the resulting confusion of black politics. Centered around the hottest day of a summer in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn and an ensuing, racially motivated riot, it depicts the generational split within the black community. The old have the same tired, non-violent, civil rights strategy. What this strategy suppresses is that many of the problems facing blacks today are substantive, economic and deal with the destruction of communities — things which formalized justice and "good feelings towards all" ignore.[16] The civil rights movement has become largely an inroad for the new black middle-class, and the rights won have done very little for the underclass, which is largely black. Spike Lee uses the characters Da Mayor and Mother-Sister to portray this movement which can provide nothing with which the majority of the political actors in the film can identify. The film's final riot can be seen as the powerlessness of the older generation to mobilize people to their alternative.

When it comes to the younger generation, Lee's movie depicts just as hopeless a situation. For the youth in the film, "rights" have become equated with consumerism — the only political movement which can be galvanized is around the question of whether or not to purchase pizza from a paternalist pizza-shop owner. This is also shown in the way Radio Raheem, an angry youth who blasts his boom box to all neighbors, confronts the pizza-shop owner by refusing to turn down his boom box. This is the false *Aufhebung* of "rights" for the younger generation — the right to pseudo-self-expression through identification with the culture industry's products, which merely allows for the further proliferation of the culture industry into the lives of the disenfranchised. Neither generation in Lee's film seems to have come to grips with the crisis of the civil rights movement or the potential nihilism which followed it.

If anything, Lee's portrayal of blacks in his film is itself nihilistic. The "black masses" are seen through the lenses of white racist stereotypes — as lazy, stupid, harassing hooligans wallowing in irrationality and violence. One of the few positive black characters to emerge is a woman who plays a marginal role. When

16. This is one of the most important points of William Julius Wilson's work. See *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, The Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). The major problem with Wilson's work is the predominantly statist, technocratic nature of his solutions.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Steven Spielberg took up Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, he was severely criticized for a systematic portrayal of black men as vicious. Although Lee has been criticized for capitulating to racist logic, his ability to claim the badge of blackness allows him the right to self-expression and self-promotion, while downplaying the repercussions and responsibilities entailed.

This crisis of self-understanding is clear in Lee's response to the reception of "Do the Right Thing." Lee's articulation is important because of the general lack of intellectuals — especially black intellectuals — and the historical situation in which young black artists have always been politicized.[17] His attempt to combat criticisms shows clearly that affirmative action politics — i.e., the victimization strategy— and post-modern politics prevents the articulation of a realistic cultural political stance. He was most noted for claiming that the Cannes Film Festival and Academy Awards judges were racist for not choosing his film.[18] Lee himself has emphasized the "racial issue" in this debate. By focusing on race and not on the question of objective, artistic criteria (which cannot be done anyway in the age of postmodern aesthetics) Lee's logic falls into internal contradictions. The accusation of racism is intractable, since it could have been made even if the film had won awards on the grounds that it was done out of racial guilt. Lee has not transcended the politics of victimization and thus cannot escape the suspicion which his type of accusations raise. At worst, it could be seen as an opportunistic way of engendering a "scandal," which would appeal to guilty white liberals and affirmative action politicos, so as to further the sale of his own cultural commodities, including not only his films but all of the paraphernalia which accompanies them (i.e., books on the films' makings, t-shirts, etc.). Lee has few options in defending himself against such claims. His claim of having been excluded by a racist culture industry (which has easily mainlined Lee's work as well as integrated him as a spokesman for his products)[19] poses himself as an iconoclastic "other" which, like Public Enemy, cannot be understood by the "racists" of the culture industry.

---

17. The lack of young black intellectuals, which is largely due to the same reasons Jacoby analyzes in his *The Last Intellectuals*, is well developed in Jerry G. Watts, "Dilemmas of Black Intellectuals" in *Dissent* (Fall, 1989), pp. 501-507. The fact that young black artists have always been political actors is traced out in Harold Cruse's *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1967).

18. For Lee's confused accusations about racism, cf. Samir Hachem, "Journey into Fear" in *The Village Voice* (June 20, 1989), p. 76.

19. See "In Hollywood, Black is In" *The New York Times* (March 4, 1990). The article quotes someone as saying: "Spike [Lee] has created a whole new recognition of the commercial viability of an audience that wasn't being served before" (p. 22 in "Arts and Leisure"). This remark alludes to a "black audience." The obvious pattern here is that a black audience is constituted by a "deficiency" in the culture industry. This "deficiency" creates a new community now fit for the culture industry's products. Then the products for this black audience are made to be enticing and exciting for a non-black audience, and this furthers the cultural industry's inclusion of blacks as well as making a general sales pitch to the non-black community.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The difficulty which black artists have in defining their own identity and politics relates to other cultural developments. One is the debate over the new appellation for a so-called "black community" — a community which is divided by class, ethnicity, style, etc. The most recent term offered for blacks has been "African-Americans." Understandably, this term seeks out heritage and roots, something black Americans have been denied. But the new appellation carries with it a subtle self-hatred. For the turn to Africa has been a part of a general search for pride. The hidden assertion cannot be missed: black Americans find nothing within their own history of which to be proud. The turn to Africa appears as a denial of one's own tradition — a tradition which has a questionable amount of "African-ness" about it since black Americans were so torn out of African culture (witness black Americans' Christianity, nuclear family formation up until the 20th century, and the distinctly American, slave origins of much "black music"). Instead of realistically facing up to their own traditions and in the process finding much to be proud of in their resistance and culture, blacks are told to turn to Africa for their pride; in the process they invalidate their own history. And the desire to seek out African-ness (whatever that may mean) in one's experience does not allow the development of a realistic politics, one which faces up to the dynamics of contemporary society. Instead, a romantic depiction of "Africa" replaces strong suggestions about what black Americans should do in light of the changing political, social and economic terrain.[20]

There is an academic counterpart to this. Clearly, a black "new class" has benefitted from the proliferation of Afro-American departments in universities. In the process of this so-called victory for tenured academics (i.e., Henry Louis Gates, Jr.), black experience in the US is drawn away from American history in general. Afro-American studies departments take on the characteristics of professional academia: compartmentalization, specialization, and professionalization. They can thus no longer inform the general experience of American history.[21] The significance of the black experience is lost. By seeking more power, black academics marginalize themselves and make the inadvertent claim that the black experience is only important for those willing to study in black studies departments. The possibility of challenging and enlivening a specialist and

20. This situation was seen in the recent visit to America by Nelson Mandela — a spectacle of spectacles (especially with his appearance at Yankee Stadium in New York City). The fact of the matter is that Nelson Mandela has very little to say to black Americans, since the political struggles of South African blacks and American blacks are so utterly different. The cathartic nature of the events of Mandela's visit seem to suggest that the whole turn to Africa for inspiration is hopeless.

21. This process is strikingly similar to the one which Zygmunt Bauman notices in terms of Holocaust studies. He writes, "More often than not, the branching off means that the scholarly interests are thereby eliminated from the core canon of the discipline; they are, so to speak, particularized and marginalized, deprived in practice, if not necessarily in theory, of more general significance; thus mainstream scholarship is absolved from the further preoccupation with them." See *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), p. xi.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

professionalized American history, through showing how "the issues surrounding Afro-American life are so crucial to any comprehensive understanding of this country,"[22] has been lost. In the process, blacks are made to be seen as having nothing in their history to inform the American experience, while tenured blacks make big bucks.

All these developments point to the underbelly of the dialectic of otherness. Postmodern pluralism vindicates the possibility of different groups speaking for themselves — something the universalist concepts of Enlightenment no longer allows.[23] Liberation seems ensured as groups announce their own needs and culture. But as minorities attempt to enunciate politics within the supposed changed terms of postmodern society, they come across the nihilistic dynamic of this postmodern configuration which every political actor faces. According to Harvey, "while it opens up a radical prospect by acknowledging the authenticity of other voices, postmodernist thinking immediately shuts off those other voices from access to more universal sources of power by ghettoizing them within an opaque otherness, the specificity of this or that language game. It thereby disempowers those voices (of women, ethnic and racial minorities . . .) in a world of lop-sided power relations."[24] As blacks fight Koreans over a shoplifting controversy in Brooklyn, this nihilistic dialectic shows its brutally ugly side, resulting in all-out war and powerlessness.

As left-liberal "progressive" thought would have it, postmodern otherness liberates the "other" for authentic speech, affirmative action repairs the misdeeds of the past, and the culture industry allows for authentic self-expression. Yet some of the most important black artists seem to constantly find themselves trapped within the logic of victimization so central to affirmative action and to certain "critical" variants of postmodern thought. The political category of victim or "the other" is frozen and reified to such an extent that political-cultural articulation is stunted at the state of "victim" — the state of passivity, accusatory politics, and the difficulty in becoming *an actor*.

The technocrat who counts numbers to fulfill quotas for affirmative action ignores the human and qualitative side to the numbers. In doing so, culture and its political implications are forgotten. Yet both culture and politics are central to black struggle for autonomy, dignity and solidarity with others. If the nihilistic cultural politics of postmodernism and victimization cannot be transcended, the vision which inspires the struggle for the betterment of all humanity will be undermined. And if this is true, then it will become more and more difficult to "fight the power" and "do the right thing."

---

22. Stanley Crouch, *Notes of a Hanging Judge* (New York: Oxford, 1990), p. xi.
23. As David Harvey writes, "The idea that all groups have a right to speak for themselves, in their own voice, and have that voice accepted as authentic and legitimate is essential to the pluralistic stance of postmodernism." David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 48.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fraser vs. Fraser

Andrew Fraser, *The Spirit of the Laws: Civic Federalism and the Unfinished Project of Republican Modernity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

Recent issues of prestigious law reviews are filled with articles discussing the merits and pitfalls of a reconstituted republican jurisprudence.[1] The discussion ranges from neo-conservative attempts to resurrect the ideal of "the contract" and "consent" of some forms of republican thought to a neo-leftist rebirth of the ideals of communitarianism and participatory democracy of the New England town meeting. Andrew Fraser's new book draws on previous work[2] to provide a "political architecture" (39) for a new version of a Federal polity in which civic virtue will be restored. As a contribution to the still raging debate over the utility and availability of republican ideals for progressive legal theory, *The Spirit of the Laws* deserves to be carefully considered, especially because it attempts to offer those who work within the "British" — as opposed to the "American" — legal tradition, a point of relevant access to a possible constitutional alternative.

A careful reading of Fraser's book, however, reveals a fundamental weakness. Instead of offering a blueprint for legal action, he idealizes a political structure that ignores the historical context from which it emerged. Instead of his self-proclaimed "joys of public happiness" (156), it prefigures a view of life that ignores the ability to act. He pretends to provide a new "hermeneutic sense of

1. See, for example, "Foreword: Traces of Self-Government," in *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 100 (1986), p. 3; Susannah Sherry, "Civic Virtue and the Feminine Voice in Constitutional Adjudication," in *Virginia Law Review*, Vol. 72 (1986), p. 543; Frank Michelman, "Law's Republic," in *Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 97 (1988), p. 1493; Cass R. Sunstein, "Beyond the Republican Revival," in the same issue, p. 1539; Richard H. Fallon, "What is Republicanism, and is it Worth Reviving?," in *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 102 (1989), p. 1695. See also Mark Tushnet, *Red, White and Blue: A Critical Analysis of Constitutional Law* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

2. See Andrew Fraser, "The Corporation as a Body Politic," in *Telos* 57 (Fall 1983), p. 5; "Legal Amnesis: Modernism versus the Republican Tradition in Americal Legal Thought," in *Telos* 60 (Summer 1984), p. 15; "Reconstituting Enlightened Despotism," in *Telos* 78 (Winter 1988-89), p. 169.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

continuity" (8) which would allow the creation of collective "imaginary self-representation" (48), but his argument is undermined by bad history, bad politics, and bad law. He sets up rigid boundaries between law and politics, and offers legal formalism and rigid political norms or undefined ideals of "the good life" with citizens engaging in free communicative interaction in open, public "political" spaces (41ff.). Unfortuntately, he reproduces the same legal and political amnesia he virulently attacks (122ff.).

The Idealization of Sovereignty.

For Fraser, the Crown (in a constitutional monarchy) is the main embodiment of hierocratic rule, i.e., rule from above — an anti-democratic, or better yet, an anti-republican form of government. As long as the head of state, the ultimate *legal* source of sovereignty, remains separate from the government, no form of authentic republican self-rule is conceivable (23ff.). Neither does the US provide an alternative model. According to Fraser, American republicanism failed to install a stable and permanent form of institutional governance, which would allow true civic democracy. Consequently, the ideal of popular sovereignty as practiced in the US maintains the same hierocratic relation found in the British tradition of constitutional monarchy (27ff.).

By denying existing forms of republican self-rule (the New England town meeting, early civic and even religious bodies corporate, the "little republics" [158ff.]) and replacing them with versions of today's elected representative democracy, American political and legal theory simply replaced one alienated form of hierocratic rule (royalty) with another hierarchy (the people-at-large).

On the surface, it is difficult to question the argument that all forms of hierarchy alienate people from true political emancipation. A system of government headed by royalty is the most blatant and retrograde example of this. A "representative democracy" is equally offensive to notions of real collective self-government. Even if representative democrary could get beyond mere television-dominated popularity contests, it is impossible not to see such forms of political life as, in a negative sense, "corruptive principles."[3]

At a more fundamental level, however, it is here that the weakness of Fraser's vision begins to appear. For Fraser, hierocratic ideals of sovereignty lead to a fundamental doctrinal incoherence in political and legal practice. This results from the apparent conflicts between a certain norm of popular sovereignty and the competing tendency to despotism inherent in hierarchical/monarchical government. It manifests itself, e.g., in the "muddle" (2 and 95) between unitary notions of sovereignty and multiplicitous federal government, and between the constitutional notion of a legal norm and a convention (241).

In Fraser's view, this incoherence is untenable. The conflict must be resolved

3. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 297. For a more detailed account, see Al Katz, *Mythologies of Political Representation* (Buffalo Critical Legal Studies, unpublished manuscript, 1983).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in a doctrinally coherent manner. In other words, there is a contradiction between reality and theory, so reality must be wrong. The fundamental flaw in Fraser's vision here is that reality is not a neat and tidy logical intellectual game. Individuals often operate within daily rules that are not dependent on the apparent doctrinal incoherence of popular sovereignty *versus* despotism. Nevertheless, the metonym of the Crown (or hierocratic rule) necessarily prevails simply because of the force Fraser and others ascribe to it.

In reality, people living within this apparently hegemonic form operate without succumbing to metonymic forces of sovereignty. For example, battles against union-smashing policies or unemployment or the abolition of local government or the poll tax actually take place within a real concrete context in which hardly a thought is given to the semiotic significance of Queen Elizabeth.

The Preponderance of Theory.

Fraser argues that federalism as it exists is incoherent because of the logical inconsistency of having two sources of sovereignty: on the one hand, there is the people; on the other, there is the head of state with executive powers. The modern problem of federalism is then to be found in the confrontation of self-rule *versus* hierarchical governmental forms. Within modern capitalism, "federal democracy" purportedly leads away from historical institutions of republican local government to a corporatist structure of federalism. The problem then is that: "Employer's associations, capitalized labor organizations, an emergent femocracy and farmers[']] lobby groups emerge as the semi-official constitutent elements in a distinctively corporatist political steering mechanism which aims at "the functional adjustment of an organically interdependent whole." (24) Therefore: "In place of 'the hybrid half-private, half-public' corporation of the *ancien regime*, the nation-state recognizes a variety of federal and corporatist mechanisms which aggregate particular territorial, cultural, ethnic, economic or occupational interests in a routinized process of consensus formation and dispute resolution." (32)

Few would dispute the claim that there is a strong corporatist tendency within the Anglo-American tradition. Again, however, this is not the whole picture. It could hardly be shown, for example, that struggles by native Americans and Canadians and the Australian Aborigines are simply part of acquiescing in a steering function. Nor are women's demands for safe streets, safe homes, or comparable worth/pay equity *merely* coporatism in action. People within federal systems obviously *act* within them to achieve their goals, but they do not *merely* perpetuate one-dimensionality when they do so. Fraser leaves individuals lost within the present system because he does not allow for the reality of living people. He does not allow for *any* self-determination in the system he describes as monolithic. What remains is the "unfulfilled aspiration" of the "idea of the republic." The objective is to "launch the third wave of republic modernization by distributing the sovereign authority now monopolized by the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Crown-in-Parliament among a multiplicity of corporate bodies politic constituted within the associational life of modern civil society." (103-104)

The Political Architecture of the Republic

After establishing the metonymic hegemony of hierocratic sovereignty and corporatist federalism, Fraser sets out to construct the "third wave of republican modernization" after the republican tradition of the Greek *polis* and the alleged failure of the American republic. The failure of Greek republicanism can be traced to "the sense of the classical distinction between the *polis*, conceived as the realm of public freedom, and the *societas* or the household, understood as the private realm of necessity." (11)

With regard to modern federalism, the attempt by early American republicans to revive the *ethos* of the *polis* was countered by the developmental logic of capitalism and its philosophical counterpart, individualistic liberalism, reinforced by evangelical Christianity, which conquered the impulse toward "civic freedom" and replaced it with self-interested wealth accumulation. In Fraser's view of American political and legal history, the logical force of history was driven by a battle between virtue and evil as embodied by republicanism, on the one side, capitalist-driven Christian Federation, on the other.

Fraser traces the fall of the American Republic to radical dichotomies in legal doctrine. Ideals of property and contract in republican legal theory were relational and social, i.e. directly connected with notions of public citizenship (103ff.). In the liberal tradition, however, property and contract became imbued with the ideal of the individual "owner" entering into discreet transactions (contracts) with other individuals. This description, however, bears little resemblance to reality. As Mensch has argued, "prior to the Revolution the notion of property right contained within it more incoherence and self-contradictions than clarity."[4] Rather than representing competing norms, the republican and liberal notions of property were confused and intertwined concepts invoked by each party against the other as it suited their purposes. Thus, in colonial New York, the Crown followed the: "policy of limiting private holdings of uncultivated land [which] was paradoxically allowed to coexist with the vast holdings of a few proprietors, chiefly Van Rensselaer and Livingston. . . ."[5] In other words, a policy of oligopoly and market access was pursued at the same time by the same people. There was also a policy permitting collective township "republican" control of "common land."[6] The republican and the liberal world were not lived as distinct doctrinal inconsistencies but as daily reality.

In similar fashion, Fraser portrays Christianity as containing contradictory movements. Opposed to the (republican) tradition, which viewed the Church as a body politic that transcended the collective will of individual members, was

4. Elizabeth Mensch, "The Colonial Origins of Liberal Property Rights," in *Buffalo Law Review*, Vol. 31 (1982), p. 635.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 665-666.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 703ff.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the (liberal) view that saw religion as a personal (individual) relation between man and God and, according to Fraser, saw the Church as simply a private corporate body in which each member possessed a proprietary interest. It was this individualist form of Christianity that promoted the expansion of capitalist freedom and the concomitant demise of republican forms of self-government.

Yet, as Mensch's study of Trinity Church in Manhattan demonstrates,[7] the interactions of religion and legal theory are complex. Trinity was able to maintain its powerful position in New York society because of its ability to link its enormous land holdings with the idea of "property." Yet it was able to maintain this link not in the hegemonic (for Fraser) context of republicanism *versus* liberalism, but by operating through three paradigm shifts from "the model of pure hierarchy" to the "model of rights and sovereignty" to the "progressive-confessional" model.[8] Religion is complex and capable of change. There is little doubt that one model of religion may dominate political life, while another, more progressive religious practice, simply occupies a marginal or subordinate position. But this is *not* a tendency to eliminate the minority practice simply because it contradicts the hegemony of doctrinal purity. On the contrary, these "underground" movements should be understood in terms of their impact on the evolution of the dominant values.

Given that federalism and American republicanism fail because of doctrinal incoherence and the logic of capital, Fraser must find a source from which the "third wave" of republicanism can emerge. He finds this in a reconstituted body politic centered around a "new" model of the corporation. It should not be surprising that he can find no historical basis for a republican politics, for Fraser is not interested in either history or practice.

The Corporation as Body Politic

For Fraser, in constituting the new republic, the key role will be played by a virtuous group of lawyers, who will presumably rediscover civic virtue in their own historical roots. Ergo: the fellow-servant rule in tort law. Under the traditional rule of tort law, known by the rubric of *respondeat superior*, an employer was responsible for negligent damage caused by an employee. The fellow-servant rule operates as an exception to this principle when the injured party is another employee (a fellow servant). In that case, the employee is the only responsible party because in entering into a contractual relation with the employer the employee implicitly accepted the risk of such injury. Common sense and historical study might lead one to criticize this as a simple example of another legal rule created in the interest of industrial capital.[9]

---

7. Elizabeth Mensch, "Religion, Revival, and the Ruling Class: A Critical History of Trinity Church," in *Buffalo Law Review*, Vol. 36 (1987), p. 427.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 430-31.

9. See Morton Horwitz, *The Transformation of American Law 1780-1860* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For Fraser, the fellow-servant *rationale* makes perfect sense: "Contract was no mere instrument of personal will and private ambition; it played a crucial role as well in attempts to lay the institutional foundation for the civic morality of a free society" (430-431). Thus: "Republican judges, or at least the greatest among them, sought to embed those relations in a legally protected matrix of civic morality drawing its inspiration from the republican ideal of the virtuous and independent citizen" (163).

Drawing on the classical distinction between the few and the many (122), Fraser sees the political virtue of the republic as a product not so much of free discussion among citizens, but as the result of human, more specifically, lawyer's, artifice (119). The few, lawyers and law professors, will be those who choose to operate regularly in the sphere of public virtue. The many, everybody else, will withdraw to the private sphere of the family (*societas*), immersing themselves in civic virtue only on momentous occasions.[10] This is Fraser's republic — one in which lawyers are believed to be virtuous, but law defines the boundaries of virtue and thus defines and delimits federal relations between corporate bodies politic and the line between the public (*polis*) and the private (*societas*).

Fraser's vision of republicanism ignores the history and context from which it emerged. It is well known that freedom in the *polis* was limited to citizens, i.e., free men. Yet, by implication at least, the new bodies politic which will constitute the federal civic republic will not be based on "territorial, cultural, ethnic, economic or occupational interests," because the concept of "virtue" transcends such petty considerations as the primary daily political modes. For Fraser: "the obvious fact that historical reality can only be achieved, understood and described in the course of a complicated process of mediation"[11] is neither obvious nor a fact. In Habermasian idealist moments, describing the public sphere as a place of free discourse, as a process of discovery of virtue, he privileges the values of consensus and commensurability without questioning their contextual historical source. As Young argues: "This idea of equal citizenship attains unity because it excludes bodily and affective particularity as well as the concrete histories of individuals that make groups unable to understand one another."[12]

---

10. This smacks of Bruce Ackerman's reactionary "constitutional moment." *See* "Discovering the Constitution," in *Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 93 (1984), p. 1013. For a critique, David Fraser, "Laverne and Shirley Meet the Constitution," in *Osgoode Hall Law Journal*, Vol. 22 (1984), p. 783.

11. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p. 155.

12. Iris Marion Young, "Impartiality and the Civic Public: Some Implications of Feminist Critiques of Moral and Political Theory," in *Praxis International*, Vol. 5 (1986), p. 381 and 398. *See* also Dru Cornell, "The Poststructuralist Challenge to the Ideal of Community," *Cardozo Law Review*, Vol. 8. Fraser is not alone in providing such a construction of republicanism. Susannah Sherry, in her "feminine" version of civic virtue, offers a vision of public life from which the real struggles of women are excluded, and replaced with an ahistorical, almost biological reductionist view of public life and the role of the disempowered in a future republican polity. "Civic Virtue and the Feminine Voice in Constitutional Adjudication," *op. cit.*, p. 543.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For Fraser, problems of incommensurability and power imbalances do not exist; not because of the perfectability of communicative ethical discourse but because he knows what virtue is. And he knows what virtue is because, if he does not, everything falls apart. Everything falls apart because if virtue does not exist, then the contingency critique of modernity must be true and all is lost.

In the final analysis, *The Spirit of the Laws* may be not so much a blueprint for the political architecture of a federal republicanism of civic corporate bodies as a futile and wrong-headeded cry against instability. Fraser wants to create a legal construct in which the lines are clear and the content of the sphere (public and private) separated by those lines is constant and publicly known. Others have shown the political instability of the public/private distinction.[13] All human artifacts, from law generally to the public/private distinction in particular, are fundamentally unstable and, despite Fraser's contrary protests, fundamentally political. Even if we could accept Fraser's assertion that law can clearly distinguish between the public and the private, it is impossible to accept any vision of the private sphere which sees it, as he does, as apolitical. The simple reality of family (private) life for millions of women belies any attempt to pretend there *must* be, for virtue's sake, a strong legal boundary between public and private.

More important, however, is Cornell's point that instability, indeterminacy, deconstruction and all the other intellectual baggage of post-modernism do not lead us to a choice between a complete absence of virtue or community, on the one hand, or a retreat to a non-existent republican past, on the other. The dominant message of the indeterminacy critique is not that all hope is lost; it is that: "The personhood of the individual can no longer be conceived as the initial form of property as Hegel, under one reading, makes it in the *Philosophy of Right*. The decentered subject is relational to the core. The self 'belongs together' with the community; it is not an entity apart."[14]

The message of modernism (or post-modernism) is the open possibility of a truly communitarian ethical project, a form of *praxis* — not of Fraser's vision of *stasis*. As Arendt argued "The boundlessness of action is only the other side of its tremendous capacity for establishing relationships, that is, its specific productivity. . . . Yet while the various limitations and boundaries we find in every body politic may offer some protection against the inherent boundlessness of action, they are altogether helpless to offset its second outstanding character: its inherent unpredictability."[15]

---

13. Alan Freeman, Elizabeth Mensch, "The Public-Private Distinction in American Law and Life," in *Buffalo Law Review*, Vol. 36 (1987), p. 237. See Andrew Fraser, "Toward a Modern/Postmodern Reconstruction of Ethics," in *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, Vol. 133 (1985), p. 291.

14. Dru Cornell, "The Poststructuralist Challenge to the Ideal of Community," in *Cardozo Law Review*, Vol. 8, p. 1013.

15. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 191.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fraser fails to come to grips with the fundamental political possibilities of indeterminacy. Instead, he seeks to impose a rigid view of politics. Given the context from which the proposed republic springs, it is little wonder that for women, people of color, and the disempowered, "skepticism is the necessary response"[16] to the republican revival.

If the law/politics distinction is to retain its coherence in the republican vision, exactly what does the new republican lawyer do? If he simply instills by example and virtue a respect for the (new?) role of law, he is no different than the old liberal lawyer. If he is actively involved in the political creation and re-creation of society (and the state, which is essential to Fraser's entire vision, whereby law stems from both levels and simultaneously guarantees their separation), then either the law/politics dichotomy must collapse or Fraser's vision is indistinguishable from those who believe in law and law-making as political *praxis*. If neither applies, then his ideal must include a state which creates law and is controlled by it and a society (the republican form, the people, etc.) which creates law (the popular will) and is controlled by it as the ground-rules for hermeneutic *phronesis*. In this world, the lawyer, as the epitome of republican virtue, must also carry over some of that virtue to the state. The other option is the lawyer as embodiment of both state and society, i.e., a status which is not imaginable within Fraser's vision of the state/society (public/private) separation but which seems to inform much of his theory.

David Fraser

---

16 Derrick Bell and Preeta Bansal, "The Republican Revival and Racial Politics," *Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 97 (1988), p. 1609.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RECENT SPECIAL ISSUES STILL AVAILABLE

71 SECTION ON CARL SCHMITT and the FRANKFURT SCHOOL *Kennedy, Jay, Söllner, Preuss* Roundtable: Intellectuals and the Academy, *Luke, Piccone, Siegel, Taves Malkan:* Pragmatism and Deconstruction *Haberkern:* On Machajsky *Zaslavsky:* The Price of Sovietization *Friedman:* The Spectacularization of Anthropology

72 SPECIAL ISSUE ON SCHMITT *Ulmen:* American Imperialism and International Law *Bendersky:* Schmitt and the Conservative Revolution *Faber:* Critique of Blumenberg *Gottfried:* Schmitt's Nouvelle Ecole *Hirst:* Schmitt's Decisionism *Pan:* Schmitt on Hamlet *Schmitt:* At Nuremberg *Schmitt:* Legal World Revolution *Schwab:* Enemy or Foe

62 DEBATES IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE *Wolin:* Modernism vs. Postmodernism *Berman:* Modern Art and Desublimation *Roelofs:* Foundations and the Supreme Court *Wellmer:* Truth, Semblance and Reconciliation *Bürger:* The Decline of the Modern Age *Jay:* Hierarchy and the Humanities *Heller:* Lukács and the Holy Family

67 SQUARING THE HEXAGON: ON FRENCH POLITICS *Karnooh:* Postmodernism in France *Mason:* Nuclear Poltics *Pignon:* European Responses to SDI *Hassner:* French Right and Foreign Policy *Daraki:* Foucault's Journey to Greece *Comay:* The Repressive Hypothesis *D'Amico:* Going Relativist *Raulet:* Marxism and the Postmodern Condition

56 ON THE GERMAN PEACE MOVEMENT *Meuschel:* Neo-Nationalism and the Peace Movement *Süss:* The "Double Decision Makes Sense"? *Honneth and Kallschauer:* A Familiar Ghost *Frankel:* The View From Australia *Hirsch:* Fundamental Opposition and Realpolitik *Pohrt:* One Nation, One Reich, One Peace *Hearn:* On Corporatism

58 RELIGION AND POLITICS *Parinetto:* On Marx's Atheism *Van Dülmen:* History of Religion as Social Science *Gershenzon:* Destinies of the Jewish People *Kovács:* Jewish Question in Hungary *Chiarante:* Pius XII to John Paul II *Hughes:* Church Renewal in Brazil *Lipsitz:* American Religion Since 1945 *Siebert:* Adorno's Theory of Religion

54 TERRORISM AND STATE TERRORISM *Corradi:* Terror in Argentina *Lovas* and *Anderson:* Friendly Repression in Hungary *Staniszkis:* Martial Law in Poland *Johnstone:* State Terror in South Africa *Bobbio:* Italy's Permanent Crisis *Elias:* Civilization and Violence *Horkheimer:* Egoism and the Freedom Movement *Kovel:* Theses on Technocracy

55 ON FRENCH SOCIALISM *Cohen:* On French Socialism *Lipietz:* Which Social Forces Are for Change? *Portelli:* French Socialist Party *Bongiovanni:* French Communist Party *Shryock:* The CFDT *Mothé:* Democracy at the Workplace? *Kesselman:* The General's Revenge *Zukin:* Deindustrialization *Gonzales:* Gaullism with a Human Face?

51 PEACE MOVEMENTS AND THE POLISH CRISIS *Arato* and *Cohen:* Peace Movement and Western European Sovreignty *Bahro:* German Non-Response to the Polish Crisis *Berman:* Opposition to Rearmament and West German Culture *Ammon* and *Brandt:* The German Question *Breines:* Berman and Social Movements *Michnik:* On Hostages

49 ON HABERMAS *Habermas:* Dialectics of Rationalization and New Social Movements *Benhabib:* Modernity and Critical Theory *Löwy:* Marxism and Revolutionary Romanticism *Zerzan:* Origins and Meaning of WWI *Landes:* Feminism and the Internationals *Buhle:* E.P. Thompson and His Critics *Kogawa:* Japan as a Manipulated Society

Cost to individuals is $8.50 each. Institutions pay $17.00 each for all back issues. Foreign orders must add 15%. Issues available: #13, #17-18 and #20-83. Address all Correspondence to: *Telos Press Ltd., 431 E. 12th St., New York, NY 10009 USA*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RECENT ISSUES STILL AVAILABLE

83 *Piccone and Ulmen:* The Future of Europe *Schmitt:* European Jurisprudence *Clarke:* Crisis of Fordism? *Policar:* Racism and its Mirror Image *Taguieff:* French Racism *Weber:* Lyotard on Discourse *Nikolinakos:* Foucault's Ethics *Tester:* The Collapse of Socialism *D'Amico:* Intellectual Eclipse *Pipa:* Serbian Apologetics *Zipes:* Reunifying Germany *Michael:* Vangard and Critique *D'Amico:* Packaging Fog

82 *Telos Conference on* The Future of Critical Theory *Meuschel:* End of East German Socialism *Adam:* On Isreal and South Africa *Elkins:* Mystical Ecology *Roth:* Durkheim and 1789 *Lichtblau:* Simmel, Tönnies and Weber on Gender *Barbiero:* After the Aging of the New Music *Kentor:* After Barbiero *Luke:* Unwrapping the Cold War and the New Deal *Piccone:* Unwrapping Luke

81 *Hullot-Kentor:* Back to Adorno *Luke:* Perestroika in the US? *Wolnicki:* Avoiding E. European Questions *Kuznetsov/Shirokov:* Converting Soviet Defense Industries *Pellicani:* Reply to Oakes *Oakes:* 4 Questions to Pellicani *Wallace:* The Two Spirits of Capitalism *Gonzales:* Exorcising Perestroika

SPECIAL SECTION ON
INTELLECTUALS AND THE UNIVERSITY

80 *Schwartz:* Reform/Repression in Tibet *Friedman:* Re-Stalinization in China *Staniszkis:* The Obsolescence of Solidarity *Tarkowski:* Corruption in Poland and the USSR *Wolnicki:* Self-Government in Poland *Leante:* Perestroika at a Snail's Puce *Grady:* On Literary Studies *Djilas:* The Communist Crisis *Bayer:* Interview with Djilas *Telò:* The SPD *Izyumov:* Demilitarizing the Soviet Economy

79 ***PERESTROIKA* IN EASTERN EUROPE**
Rittersporn: Reforming the Soviet System *Carlo:* Contradictions of Perestroika *Bauman:* Poland: On its Own *Ost:* The Transformation of Solidarity *Urban:* Hungary in Transition *Nikolić:* Yugoslavia's Failed Perestroika *Selucky:* Perestroika in Czechoslovakia *Süß:* East Germany's Politics *Pipa:* Glasnost in Albania? *Pitassio:* Reforms in Bulgaria

78 *Bauman:* Universality and Particularity *Zuckermann:* Israel and the Holocaust *Schuler:* Back to Union Station

SYMPOSIUM ON:
WEBER'S *THE PROTESTANT ETHIC*
Special Section on Recent Weber Literature
Fraser: On Enlightened Despotism *Zipes:* On German History *Bendersky:* Carl Schmitt as Occasio

77 *Piccone:* Reinterpreting 1968 *Bauman:* Jewish Assimilation *Adorno:* Aging of the New Music *Heidegger:* Letter to Husserl's Daughter *Luke:* Political Economy of Colorization *D'Agostino:* Machajsky and the New Class *Schlesier:* Lévi-Strauss and Myth *Jacoby:* New York Intellectuals *Bokina:* Music, Postmodernism and Critical Theory *Good:* The Posthumous Sartre *Ezra:* The Forces of Reproduction

76 *Fuch and Procacci:* Strong Liberalism *Fischer* and *Mandell:* On Meritocracy *Luke:* Dreams of Deep Ecology *Antonio and Knapp:* Democracy and Abundance *Gottfried:* Remembering the 60s *Delfini:* Remaking Love *Kasinitz:* Facing up to the Underclass *Good:* Beyond the American Dream *Pollak:* Politics and Rhetoric

ROUNDTABLE ON COMMUNITARIANISM

75 *Pellicani:* Weber and Calvinism *Likhanov:* Crime in Central Asia *Huhn:* Jameson and Habermas *Pecora:* Simulacral Economies *Corradi:* Transition to Democracy *Cheresky:* Democracy in Argentina *Berman:* On South Africa *Antonio:* Searching for Justice *Gottfried:* The Mind of Eugene D. Genovese *Wilke:* Frank's Theory of Interpretation

SPECIAL 20th ANNIVERSARY SECTION

74 *Piccone:* American Conservatism *Zaslavsky:* Three Years of Perestroika *Pellicani:* The Genesis of Capitalism *Söllner:* Marcuse in the 40s-50s *Trumpener:* West Berlin "at 750" *Pipa:* Stalin and Hoxha *Schuler:* Baby M *Payne:* Talking Around Terrorism *Gottfried:* Heidegger on Trial *McColl* and *Alt:* Terror and Hope in South Africa *Siegel:* Back to the Future *Berman:* Counterculture and Consumerism

Personal subscriptions cost $28 per year (4 issues) (institutions: $70). Foreign orders add 15%. Checks must be in US funds drawn on US banks. Available back issues at $8.50 each (institutions: $17): 13, 17-18, 20-51, 53-83. For subscription, back issues etc., write:

Telos Press Ltd., 431 E. 12th Street, New York NY 10009

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Price: $8.00